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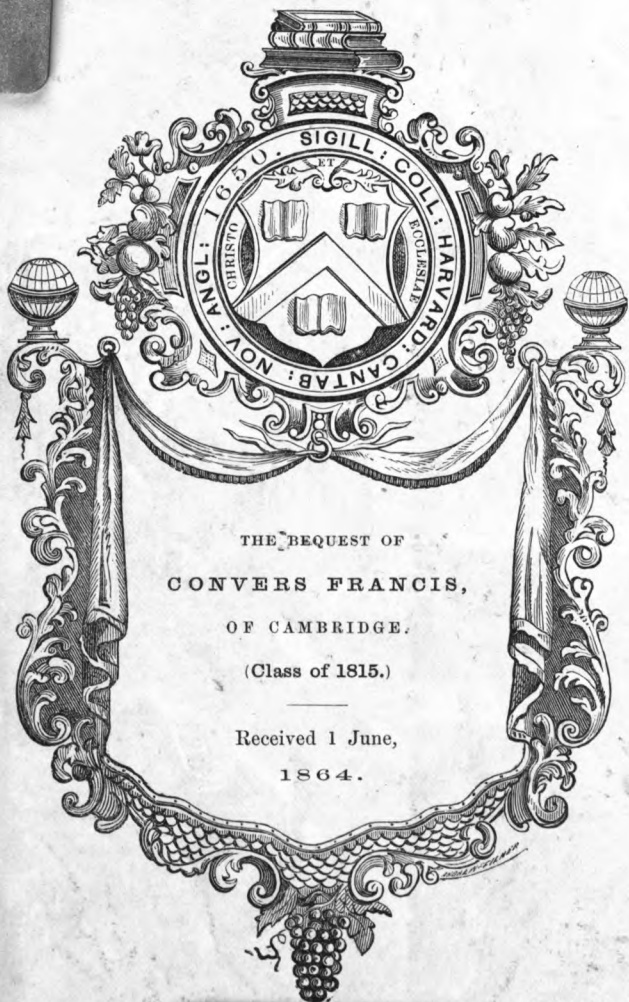


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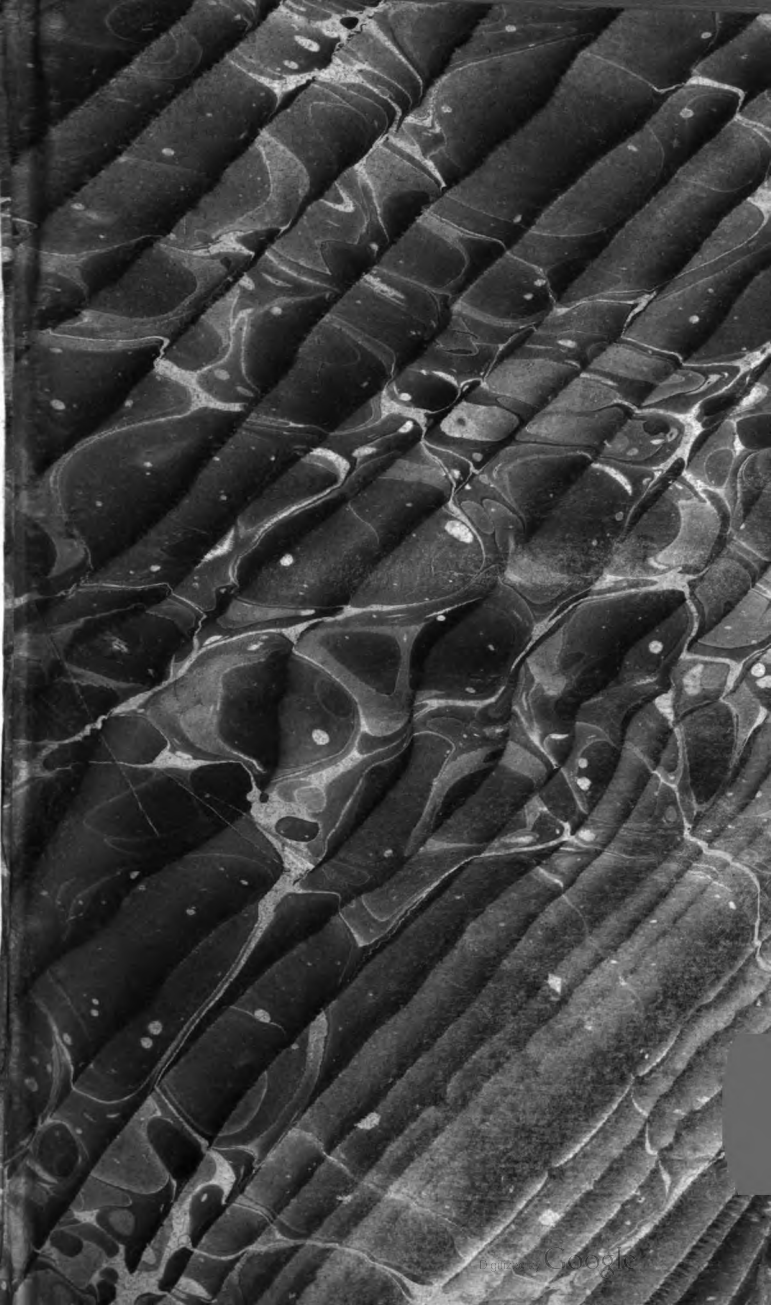
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FAREWELL TO TIME,
OR
LAST VIEWS OF LIFE,
AND
PROSPECTS OF IMMORTALITY.

INCLUDING
DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES,—A GREAT VARIETY OF WHICH
ARE IN THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE,—TO
BE USED BY THE SICK, OR BY THOSE
WHO MINISTER TO THEM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE MORNING AND EVENING SACRIFICE."
Thomas Wright, of Borthwick, Scotland.

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord.—*Revelation xiv. 13.*

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PREFACE.

AMONG all the offices of religion, none is more important and interesting, or ought to be performed with more careful preparation, than that of ministering to the instruction and consolation of the Dying.

In respect of this set of duties, every "Minister of the Word" ought especially to be a "Man of God,"—able to speak a word in season to the souls that are in trouble ;—and no opportunity ought to be neglected by those who have thus "been separated unto the Gospel," of offering to the afflicted those truly divine consolations, which are so characteristic of the blessed doctrine of Jesus Christ our Lord.

But it is not upon the Ministers of the Word solely, or, indeed, chiefly, that the important task of ministering to the dying is devolved. The visits of the most faithful and affectionate Clergyman can be but occasional ;—and the utmost that can be expected from his most zealous intercourse with the dying, is perhaps a fuller display of the riches of those treasures of "divine consolation and of good hope through grace," which are contained in the Gospel,—and a more solemn and formal approach to that throne, from which there is dispensed, according to the blessed promise of the new covenant, "Mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, in time of need."

In those long and trying hours which intervene

between such seasons of Ministerial visitation, the sick chamber must be relieved by the presence of others, who take an affectionate interest in the welfare of the sufferer,—or who probably are related to him by the nearest and most endearing of earthly sympathies ;—and it is upon their ability and disposition to do the office of comforters, and to unfold the grand views and cheering hopes of the Gospel, that the preparation of the afflicted must chiefly depend,—in so far as that preparation can be promoted by any aid of man,—for the great struggle which is soon to commence,—and for the unspeakable interests of that future world, on which the soul that is about to bid “ Farewell to Time,” is destined to enter. Indeed, those who have seen many such scenes cannot but have been struck with the fact, that the humblest Christians, when their religion is of a pure and scriptural kind, and frequently, on such occasions, instruments, in the hands of providence, of communicating both consolation and light, which the most gifted mind might well consider itself as honoured in bestowing,—and this consideration ought to remind all men, that among the constant opportunities which are afforded by the occurrence of death, in one shape or another, and in all the families with which we can be connected, there is no man so low in his sphere, as not to be in a condition, if he chooses to qualify himself, for affording the most valuable of all services to the souls of his fellow-creatures, and of doing them that good at a time when it is sure of being both most acceptable and most efficacious.

These being the views which the Author entertains,

he has often regretted that so few good helps can be found, for the performance of this duty, in the multitude of treatises, in other respects of great value, which profess to have this object in view. Indeed, if there be any part of Christian ministration, with respect to which it is momentous that such aids should exist, as may enable private Christians to do this office to each other in a becoming and efficient manner,—it is, unquestionably, that which relates to the preparation of the Sick for their great change;—and the object of the Author of the following treatise, accordingly, has been, in the first place, to have the honour of being *directly* useful to the afflicted, by the instruction and comfort which his work may afford to them;—in the second place, to assist the younger members of his profession in their endeavours to qualify themselves for so truly important and interesting a task;—and, above all, to produce a book which may enable Christians of all ranks, in their visits to the death-beds of the sick, and during those hours of patient watching which are so often demanded of those to whom the sufferers are dear,—to sooth and enlighten their minds, by offering unto them some of the invaluable riches of that exhaustless treasure which is contained in the blessed volume of divine truth.

It appears to the Author, then, that in ministering to the dying, four things will present themselves as proper to be done.

In the first place, it is necessary to offer such views to *their understandings*, as may be to them an “anchor to their souls,” amidst the darkness and agitations of that sea of troubles on which they are then tossed;—for it unfortunately happens, that there are but few, even

of those who have been well disposed through life, who have so carefully and unsuccessfully studied religion, as to have settled for themselves those views which they ought to contemplate, when their hopes and fears are powerfully awakened by the prospect of so momentous a change ;—indeed, it will be found, that by far the greater number of those who are stretched upon a bed of sickness, have been overtaken by this calamity before they were aware on what thoughts of divine truth they ought to fix, that they “ may give rest unto their souls ; ”—and the first thing, therefore, which the minister of Christ, or the discreet visitant of the Sick, has to perform, is to give them such views of the character of God,—of his providential dispensations,—and of his future plans,—as may enable them to repose, with some measure of confidence, in the loving-kindness of him, who, during all the past portions of their existence, has never failed to watch over them “ for good.”

In the second place, it is necessary to assist them in the performance of their *devotional duties*,—and to give these duties such a direction and tone, as are suited to the condition of persons who are labouring under severe and apparently mortal affliction,—who stand, chiefly, therefore, in need of consolation and strength,—and who are about to undergo that great trial of their faith, which God has demanded as the last test of their confidence, as beings who have already experienced, that, even amidst the most apparently disastrous circumstances, his presiding mercy has never entirely deserted them.

In the third place, besides devotional duties, there are *certain actions* which the Sick ought to perform,—

such as setting their affairs in order,—being reconciled to those with whom they have been at variance,—giving a beginning to useful plans,—and offering good advices to those whom they are about to leave, and in whose welfare they are supposed to take an affectionate interest. These are *actions*, of the duty and importance of performing which, the Sick ought to be reminded, if they are still in such a state as fits them for the performance of any deliberate and voluntary actions.

In the last place, there are *Prospective Views* which it may be proper to offer to the minds of the Dying ;—views respecting that future life on which they are about to enter,—and which may render it an object of that rational and affectionate desire, which, as the greatest of all the articles of divine revelation, it was undoubtedly intended, by divine wisdom, to awaken.

Such, accordingly, is the plan upon which the arrangement of the different parts of the following work has been constructed.

The reader may observe, however, that the second part, which contains the *Devotional Services*, is arranged differently from any other treatise of the same kind, —and that the Series of Prayers is so constructed, as at once to offer a comprehensive view of the most important articles of Christian belief, and to form a scriptural comment on the general considerations which are introduced in the preceding part of the work. There are also some other peculiarities in the devotional portion of the work which the Author ventures to consider as recommendations ;—he alludes, in particular, to the separation of the prayers for those who

cannot join in the petitions from those which the sick themselves are supposed to employ ;—to the very important section, also, which contains devotions proper to be used by those who witness and minister to the afflictions of the Young,—and, lastly, to what he has termed the “Funeral Service adapted to the forms observed by the people of Scotland.”

With respect to this last section, the Author, perhaps, might have rendered his work more useful, if he had given to that particular department of it another title. The fact is, that the Devotional Exercises which it prescribes, are meant to be what ought, in strict propriety, to have been called a *private* Funeral Service,—and are equally well adapted to the use of those who have a prescribed *public office* for the dead, as for those whose religious forms admit of no such offices. The prayers, therefore, of this portion of the work, being for *private use*, are as well fitted to be used by the natives of England as of Scotland—and the Author was only led to speak of them as particularly adapted to the forms observed in Scotland, by the consideration, that in that country there is no service of any kind appropriated to that very important occasion.

The “*Prospective Views*” presented in the last part of the work, are, in some respects, different from those commonly given. The Author, however, is satisfied, that it is important to render the great doctrine of everlasting life, as interesting to the affections of the human heart, as possible,—and that though the subject is confessedly above the complete investigation of any mortal mind, yet views better founded in nature,—more conformable to the plans of divine wisdom as we now observe them,—and more consolatory to the

Sick, as well as engaging to the Healthy and Active, than those commonly presented on these topics,—may be gained by those who apply themselves to the interpretation of “the visible things of God,” with all the helps which improved knowledge and a judicious use of revealed truth are fitted to afford.

The two works which the Author has now submitted to the public, along with another, executed on the same plan, and intended as a preparation for devout participation of the “Last Supper,” complete his labours as a writer on devotional subjects. He is not dissatisfied, however, but thankful, that circumstances, over which he had not an entire control, have led him to devote some portion of his time to such works ; for his conviction is daily becoming more complete, that this is a field of usefulness which has not hitherto been sufficiently cultivated, but which is capable, under judicious culture, of producing most excellent fruits. Works of devotion, if executed in a style at all conformable to the improved taste of the present age, and offering just and satisfactory views of the divine dispensations, would be hailed, he believes, by Christians in general with affectionate delight,—and are fitted, by passing into daily use, and by their direct appeal to the purest and noblest feelings of the human heart, to produce effects which cannot be expected, in the same degree, from the most powerful exhibitions of human duty, when given in the more formal but less touching shape of regular disquisitions.

In a future work, the Author means to offer a picture of the conduct of a good man in the faithful discharge of the duties of “Active and Social Life.” This treatise, along with those already published, will

complete a series of connected works, illustrative of the duties of man ; First, As an active and social being ;—Secondly, As a being holding devout intercourse with his Maker ;—and, Thirdly, as a being who is preparing to pass from his transient existence in this world to the awful and enduring realities of a greater.

The Author has also plans of a higher kind, the outlines of which he has already sketched,—and the accomplishment of which would at once afford delightful occupation to himself during future years —and render his life, he hopes, not altogether useless to the interests of piety and of sound knowledge among men. These plans all relate to the situation of man as a subject of the vast and progressive “ Kingdom of God,”—and to his consequent prospects under those greater developments which the economy of that kingdom is hereafter to undergo. These are subjects which present the most delightful and edifying of all topics of contemplation to the human understanding ;—and they are topics on which a mind, guided by a liberal but candid and pious spirit, is as capable, it is humbly believed, as on any other subjects of study, of progressively attaining to clearer, more pleasing, and better-founded conclusions.

The completion of the Author’s design, however, in so far as these speculations are concerned, must depend upon the measure of health with which it shall please Divine Providence hereafter to favour him.

EDINBURGH, 8th April, 1828.

PART FIRST.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD BE MADE FAMILIAR TO THE MINDS OF THE DYING.

ISAIAH xl. 1, 2. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
saith your God.”

ISAIAH xxxv. 4. “Say unto them that are of a fearful
heart, Be strong, fear not.”

1 COR. xv. 57. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us
the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I.

THE PARENTAL GOODNESS OF GOD.

MATT. vi. 9. *Our Father which art in heaven.*

THE idea of the "Parental goodness of God," implies that we are at all moments under the care of a Being, who by all his previous dispensations, has shown himself to be actuated only by a desire to promote our welfare,—a Being, from whose munificent goodness we received the nature which distinguishes us, and our situation amidst the wonderful universe in which our lot is cast,—who has constantly followed us, during our progress of life, with loving kindness and tender mercy,—and to whom, indeed, even amidst the wreck of all other sources of enjoyment, the heart of man still feels that it can commit itself with security, as into the hands of a Being, who can have no purpose in view for it, even by his apparently severest dealings, but the eventual establishment of its best and most permanent happiness.

There is something, indeed, in the highest degree striking and instructive in the thought, that God has so drawn the heart of man to himself, and so incorporated the evidence of his fatherly disposition with the events which he has ordained as the portion of all the children of men, that it is not possible for even the most afflicted of his creatures to look back upon all the way in which

he has been led, without feeling, that the Being who gave him his place in existence is still his best friend, amidst all the disasters which that existence may have brought with it,—that, indeed, we are secure of eventual good, whenever we are conscious that, even amidst the loss of all temporal comforts, we can, with true purpose of heart, commit all our concerns for time and for eternity to his hands,—and that the lowest state of destitution, and of mental perversion, accordingly, into which any rational creature can fall, is that of entertaining a doubt respecting the friendly dispositions of the Being who created him, or conceiving that the goodness which has so abundantly blessed all other creatures has been turned, in his particular case, into enmity and malice.

It is consolatory to think, that God has so taken care of the hearts of his creatures, that this suspicion is never seriously entertained while the common powers and feelings of human nature remain in their ordinary and sane state,—and the first idea, accordingly, which should be awakened in the minds of the afflicted or dying, is that of the evidence which this care of Divine Providence affords, that we are at all moments in the hands of a Being who wishes that all his creatures should consider him as their Father and Friend,—and who only occasionally calls them to a severer trial of their confidence, that he may eventually manifest to them more abundant tokens of his parental kindness.

II.

MYSTERIOUS BUT WISE CONDUCT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE
IN HIS PAST DISPENSATIONS TOWARDS ALL MEN, AND
THE EVIDENCE THUS AFFORDED TO THEM OF THEIR
BEING PARTS OF SOME GREAT AND GOOD SCHEME
WHICH IS YET TO BE CARRIED INTO MORE FULL DE-
VELOPMENT.

PSALM lxxi. 6.—xxx. 15. *By thee have I been
holden up from the womb. My times are in thy
hand.*

THE more carefully and comprehensively we
examine the past conduct of Divine Providence
towards us, the more clearly do we perceive, not
only that goodness and loving-kindness have fol-
lowed us all our days, but that all the parts,—even
the most apparently minute and distant parts,—of
our history, have had a relation to each other—
and that what we have already passed through has
thus been but part of some grand design, of the
full purpose of which we are as yet incapable of
forming an adequate conception—and which is still
going forward, even amidst the apparent ruin of
all the ties which bound us to this earth, that it
may undergo a more complete disclosure in some
greater and more enduring world, on which we have
yet to enter.

We, thus, came into existence at a time when
all things seemed to have been prepared for us—
it was our having come at that precise time, indeed,
that determined the whole subsequent events of
our history,—the persons with whom we were to
be associated in life, the education we were to re-

ceive,—the part of the grand scheme of Divine Providence we were to witness,—the blessings that in our individual cases we were to enjoy,—and the trials and temptations, to which also, as part of our individual experiences, we were to be exposed.

And as we thus came into existence by an apparently particular act of the providence of God, so, in the course of that experience which we have had during life, we cannot but perceive, that the same sovereign but wise and good Providence has, at all moments, been overruling our plans and actions, and leading us in a way which we did not altogether choose for ourselves, and the occurrences of which we have had but a very partial power of determining—so that, while we have, indeed, reaped to a certain extent the appropriate consequences both of our good, and of our evil deeds, there has also been much in our lives, of which we cannot say, that we have had any absolute disposal,—and which, forming part of a vast design, extending from the first moment of our existence to that which terminates our connexion with this world, bears evident traces, to an eye that thus surveys its whole earthly history at a glance, of the directing and disposing hand of that Providence in whom we live, and move, and have our being—and who has evidently been conducting, by all his dispensations, some grand scheme, of which we have formed but a subsidiary part, though to ourselves, undoubtedly, the most important and interesting of all its parts.

And when we are called to bid adieu to every thing that had interested us on earth, that scheme still seems, in the case of every human being—however long he may have lived—to have been broken off in its progress, and to bear marks of a

design which in itself, indeed, was magnificent and striking, but which,—so far as this world is concerned,—now meets our eye as only a grand and melancholy ruin. We may be certain, however, that God does not, in any instance, permit his plans thus to remain without their entire accomplishment—and far more, that he cannot be considered, as thus frustrating the hopes, and destroying his own work in the case, of every individual of the highly-gifted race with whom he has peopled this world—and, consequently, that we have the best of all reasons for submitting to whatever apparent disasters may be ordained to terminate our connexion with this world, from the assurance afforded by this review of the past scheme of Providence, that we are only advancing, by means of these calamities, to some grander and more comprehensive display of the wonders of that plan, of which our individual lives have thus formed a part.

III.

THAT THE PLAN OF PROVIDENCE, IN SO FAR AS WE CAN TRACE IT, IS THAT OF BRINGING GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

Rom. viii. 28. *All things work together for good.*

It would be consolatory only to know that goodness and tender mercy have characterized the more prominent features of that scheme amidst which we find ourselves placed—but our security and comfort must be incalculably increased, when, upon a nearer survey of life, we perceive that kindness

has characterized even those parts of the Divine dispensations that to us seemed, at the time of their occurrence, to be most dark and unaccountable—and that thus, so far from being exceptions to the general scheme, they but evince, when properly estimated, the boundless beneficence and complete unity of design by which the entire system of the Divine government is pervaded.

Thus the sorrows and hardships of our youthful years only prepared us for the honours and happiness of more advanced life—sufferings which tried our maturer strength to the uttermost, and the purpose of which seemed to be covered, from our view, at the time, by a veil of mystery, have in every instance been perceived—if we have had sufficient experience of their effects—to have had some good and wise connexion with important portions of our history which were afterwards to be evolved—and we have thus learnt, or might have learnt, as we advanced in life, that our own murmurings have been, in every instance, but proofs of our own folly—and that nothing could have been more hurtful to us than to have had our wishes granted, in any of the instances, in which the Father of our spirits seemed to have been dealing most severely with us.

The severest trials, indeed, which life presents will always be found, when duly improved, to have terminated,—and to have been intended to terminate,—in the most important blessings;—and it would surely argue a culpable distrust of Providence, to suppose, that a different plan will be found to have characterized the concluding scheme of the Divine dispensation towards us, from that which has marked all its previous parts—that the merciful hand which has so wisely and graciously led us through all the preceding steps of our mor-

tal journey, will cease to guide and to support us, at that moment, when our strength is weakest, and our need of its guidance is most urgent—or that we have not reason to believe, that as God has seen fit to call his creatures to their severest conflict, when life is drawing to a close, it is only because he intends—if we pass well through our trial—eventually to bless us, by some grander manifestation of his providential love, than any that has marked our progress during our sojourn amidst the varied but imperfect scenes of that world we are so unwilling to leave.

IV.

MERCIFUL CHARACTER OF GOD—MORE ESPECIALLY AS THAT CHARACTER HAS BEEN REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

MATT. xxii. 2. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.*

MAN is born not only to sorrow but to sin—and no individual, accordingly, can look back upon life, without feeling that he has failed, in many respects, to do that which he ought to have done—that he has also been guilty of many positive, and, perhaps, of some great violations of the divine law—that, at any rate, the progress of life has been to him, from the experience of his own failures, a sad series of humiliations and of fears—and that, in bidding adieu to life, and entering upon the untried scenes of eternity, his greatest

anxiety is, what he shall answer to God for all the deeds that have marked his life, or what atonement he can plead for the constant failures of which he has been guilty.

1. It is, however, when the mind is agitated by such thoughts, that it becomes most sensible of the peculiar adaptation of that revelation, which has been made in the Gospel, to the deepest wants and fears of the human heart—for the distinctive character of the Gospel is, that it is a proclamation, on the part of Heaven, of mercy and forgiveness to those who have offended, but who have become conscious of their offences, and are willing to lay hold of the hope that has been set before them—and we never properly understand the true excellence of Christianity, till we have thus learnt to regard it as the sweet and cheering voice of divine compassion diffused over a world, all the inhabitants of which feel within themselves the consciousness of guilt, and have all their hopes clouded by this baleful sentiment.

2. More particularly the Gospel has substantiated this message, by announcing to us the appearance upon this earth, and in the nature of man, of one who bore the title of the best-beloved of the sons of God—and who came among us “full of grace and truth,”—not only to proclaim the forgiveness and tender pity of God, and to be, in his own person, an evidence of the disposition of the Father who sent him to fulfil the terms of that message which he was empowered to deliver—but at last to offer up himself as the sacrifice for the sins of men—that, when troubled with the fears of guilt, and anxious to find some offering of atonement, which they may present unto God, they may look to this offering up of his obedient Son,—and be satisfied, that He who

gave Christ to die for us will refuse nothing that is needful for their final acceptance, to those who receive him "in faith and love."

3. Still farther, that the value and importance of this message might be made known, in all coming times, this beloved Son of God appointed institutions, and consecrated an order of men to be standing memorials of his love to all the generations that were yet to come forth—he thus represented that new dispensation which he came to introduce as a "marriage" prepared by the eternal King in honour of his Son—and to which men of all countries and of all times were to be invited ;—and when, accordingly, in any age of the existence of Christianity, men come to its ordinances, or partake of its privileges, they give evidence by so doing, if they rightly understand the meaning of the action they are performing, of the sense which they entertain of their need of pardon—and of the fine provision which has been made, in the Gospel, for supplying this most urgent and momentous of all the wants by which humanity is afflicted.

4. It is, lastly, the beautiful representation of Christianity, upon this subject, "that there is joy in heaven when a sinner repenteth"—and that the best image we can form of the tender pity of God, is that of a father rejoicing over the return of a son who had gone astray from duty, but who had at last seen the error of his ways, and returned with sincere contrition, saying, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, Make me as one of thy hired servants. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him—and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet—and bring hither the fatted calf,

and kill it—and let us eat and be merry—for this my son was dead, and is alive again—he was lost, and is found.”

“Likewise,” said the divine Teacher, “I say unto you, There is joy, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.”

V.

IMPORTANT LESSONS TO BE LEARNED BY THE DYING FROM THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 8. *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.*

1. THE first thing which strikes us, when we compare the dignity of Christ and the grandeur of his office, with the plan of life that was marked out for him by Providence, is, that his life was, generally, one of great humiliation and of much oppressive suffering ;—it, certainly, was not such a plan of life, as was either anticipated by those to whom the promise of his coming had been given, or would, in all probability, have been conceived, by even the wisest of mankind, who might have speculated on the possibility of such a manifestation of divine condescension being made to our race ;—but after it has been revealed as having actually taken place, we can see the most beautiful accommodation in it to the wants of a race of

beings who are doomed by the very nature which they inherit to labour and sorrow—and more especially the afflicted and the dying may derive much consolation, from reflecting, that if God saw proper to subject him, who came as the best beloved of his sons into this world, to such a course of humiliation and of grief, there is no reason why we should consider ourselves as abandoned by Providence, because our lot in life may render it necessary for us to pass through a similar series of afflictions and privations. Christ, says the inspired writer, was considered, because of his sorrows, “as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”—yet so far was all this from being any proof of the displeasure of his Father, that it was only because he was to fulfil the highest of all missions to the human race, that God thus saw fit to make him “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

2. Beside, however, this general character of the life of Christ, it is to be considered, that when he was about to complete his sacrifice of obedience to the Divine will, he was exposed to an affliction of peculiar severity, being as the sacred writer has characterized it, “in an agony,” so that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground—and thrice he prayed, saying “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me—nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.”

Indeed, the life of Christ, without this awful endurance, would not have been so perfect a representation of that course through which every partaker of human nature has been ordained to pass—for it has not only been appointed for all men once to die, but, in the ordinary course of Providence, the period of our departure from life

is preceded by greater and more continued afflictions than had marked any of its preceding portions—and the “agony” of our Lord may thus be considered as a part of his mortal history corresponding with that which every heir of mortality has also to encounter. This, then, is a portion of our Saviour’s history which ought, especially, to commend itself to the study of the dying—and, in no part of his history, does the perfect beauty of his example shine forth with more engaging lustre. For his first virtue, as made evident during this sore trial, was that of the perfect submission, with which, amidst a peculiar sensibility to his sufferings, he bowed to the righteous appointment of his heavenly Father, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me—nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.” In the next place, his conduct, during the same awful scene, was marked by the most forgiving gentleness to the weakness of those who meant to minister to his sorrows, but who failed in their wish, from the heaviness of the trial, and the preternatural darkness of that hour—for we read, that when he found the disciples who had attended him to the scene of his agony, overpowered by sleep, he only apologized for their weakness in these compassionate words,—“The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

The first duty of the dying, then, in imitation of this example, is submission, even amidst the severest trials, to the perfect wisdom of that Being, who has appointed them their trial—or, in the words of our blessed Lord himself, who has put into their hands the “cup” that has been given them to drink—and every Christian ought to be prepared, when thus tried to the uttermost, to say, “Heavenly Father, not my will, but thine be done.”—Along with this resignation to God, we ought

also to show all gentleness and forbearance to those who wish to minister to our relief, but who may not, at all times, be able to satisfy the demand, which our sense of suffering may induce us to make on them. Indeed, a broken spirit, and a ruined frame, are not easily satisfied with any attentions which friends can show,—and we ought all, therefore, like our blessed Lord, to be prepared, by previous habits of gentleness and forbearance, to say, when we are most disappointed in our expectations of comfort from the attentions of our friends,—“The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.”—Meek resignation to the will of God, and a gentle and forbearing conduct to those who are around us, are among the virtues best suited to a death-bed—and were unquestionably meant to be recommended to us as so suited, by having shone, with such beautiful lustre, in the great “agony” of him, who did, in all things, that which was “well pleasing in the sight of God.”

3. Still further, it was part of the plan of Providence, with respect to Christ, not only that he should suffer,—even unto death,—but that he should *voluntarily* advance to this last trial of his obedience, in the pursuit of a great object which had been marked out for him by God. It has accordingly been significantly said by the Evangelist, that “Jesus, knowing that all things had now been fulfilled” which it was necessary for him to suffer previous to his death, “set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem—and that as he went up, he took his disciples apart by the way, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed at the hands of men—and they shall mock, and scourge, and crucify him—and the third day he shall rise again.”

Now it was because Christ thus *voluntarily* met death—a public, a painful, and an accursed death—in that course of duty on which, as the servant of God, he had been sent—and because he was not deterred from the fulfilment of his mission by the prospect, which he distinctly foresaw, of all the sorrow and all the shame that were about to fall on him,—it was because he thus was faithful, even unto the “accursed death of the cross,” that God also, after he had humbled him to the uttermost, made this course of humiliation but the path to him of more transcendent honours than had ever been conferred on any other partaker of human nature—for, on this account, says the sacred writer, “God also raised him from the dead,”—and called him visibly unto his kingdom,—and “set him at his own right hand,”—and made him “the head over all things to the church,”—and has finally constituted him the judge by whom the sentence, of approbation or of condemnation, is to be pronounced upon all who have lived, according to the deeds done by them in the body, “whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil.”

And all this was done—all this glory and honour followed the voluntary humiliation and steadfastness, even unto death, of Christ, the pattern of all obedience to men, to instruct us, that our suffering of death shall also be followed, if we encounter the last enemy with fortitude, by a corresponding weight of glory—or that to those who have been faithful not only in life, but through death, their last humiliation is only introductory to such scenes of glory, and of triumph, as “the eye of man has never seen, nor his ear heard, nor his imagination is capable of conceiving.”

So truly beautiful and full of interest are the lessons conveyed to all men,—and especially to

those who are about to depart from life,—by the events which composed the personal history of our Lord—and so true is it, that these lessons altogether form a grand moral picture,—illustrative of the entire Destiny of Man,—which was still more above the conception of the humble individuals by whom his life has been recorded, than even the matchless outline which their artless writings convey of the features of a *character*, which has justly entitled him who bore it, to be the model of all excellence to the human race.

VI.

ADAPTATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE RESPECTING
THE INTERPOSITION OF CHRIST TO SOME NATURAL
SENTIMENTS OF THE HUMAN HEART.

HEB. ii. 14. *Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.*

JOHN i. 29. *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

1 COR. xv. 20. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them who slept.*

HEB. iv. 15. *We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.*

JOHN v. 22. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*

1. IN the first place, we anxiously wish that some

visible token should be given to us of the paternal love with which the everlasting Father continues to regard the inhabitants of this world,—and that though to us he is invisible, and we cannot see God and live, he would yet grant us such a manifestation of his condescending grace as is suited to our nature, and to the condition of creatures who are, in some measure, capable of tracing in the works of Creation the proofs of his existence. Now, to satisfy this natural desire, Christ has been revealed to us, as “God manifested in the flesh,”—as “Immanuel,”—“God with us,”—and every Christian, accordingly, when he is laid upon that bed from which he is to rise no more, may derive invaluable consolation, simply from recollecting, that “Christ was made bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,”—that “God sent his Son in the likeness of man,”—and that that Son “pitched his tent among us, not in the nature of angels, but as one of the seed of Abraham,” to afford a visible pledge of the continued love of our Father who is in heaven,—and that we may therefore be certain, that the nature which was honoured by such high participation, is valuable in the sight of God, amidst all the humility in which it is now found, and will continue to be regarded by him with interest, even when death seems to have reduced it to utter loathsomeness.

2. There is also a natural wish in the human heart to present some atonement unto God for the evils which it has done,—and, accordingly, we find mankind in every age of their existence, and almost in every country which they have occupied, giving evidence of the existence of this desire, by approaching the altars of their peculiar worship with some consecrated offerings of penitence and hope. Now it was, to satisfy this

desire, that Christ has been revealed, in the Gospel, as the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,"—that his offering up of himself, even unto death, is represented as the grand propitiation for the sins of men—and that when, therefore, we are oppressed with a sense of guilt, and wish anxiously for some atonement which we may make unto God, we are authorized to look unto this once offering up of himself, of "that Lamb who was without spot or blemish,"—and to believe that it has been a sacrifice "of a sweet-smelling savour" in the sight of God.

3. We further feel a natural wish to approach the Invisible Author of all good, by means of some Mediator, who is allied to our weakness, by having been a Participator of the nature which we inherit,—and it is, accordingly, the beautiful representation of Scripture on this subject, that Christ has been made, for his humiliation unto death, the grand Dispenser of Divine bounty to that race of beings whose nature he honoured by having once born it as his own,—that we have thus not "an High-Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin,"—and that, through his intercession, we may now "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, in our time of need."

4. We naturally wish, in the last place, as Beings who have an account to render of all the deeds done in the body, that our sentence should be pronounced by One who is acquainted, from his own experience, with all the weakness and temptations of our lot,—and to whom we may at once appeal as a righteous Dispenser of the awards of justice, and a merciful Sympathiser with the frailties of our

frame. It is, accordingly, to satisfy this natural wish, that it has been said in Scripture, that the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all "Judgment unto the Son,"—that Mercy, consequently, will be mingled with Judgment, in so far as that mercy can be extended consistently with the righteous administration of God,—and that while the punishment of the impenitent shall be augmented by the very circumstance of its having been awarded by one who once died that they might be saved from destruction, the exaltation of the righteous shall be enhanced by being partaken of with him to whom "all power in heaven and on earth has been committed,"—and who is destined, as a Judge suited to their human nature, eventually to conduct them, as his Redeemed, into the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

So full of consolation to our most natural feelings and wishes are the grand peculiarities of the Christian faith,—when these peculiarities are rightly interpreted,—and so well entitled, especially, are those who have the near prospect of giving account unto God of all the deeds done by them in the body, to value the revelation of Christianity as the most blessed of all gifts unto men,—and, from the bottom of their hearts, to thank God, that he has thus, in Christ, made them "partakers of divine consolation and of good hope through grace."

VII.

CONSOLATION THAT MAY BE DERIVED BY THE DYING FROM THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST, AND FROM THE RECOLLECTION OF HIS PAST DEALINGS WITH THEM.

PHILIPPIANS i. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.*

IT is not the purpose of Divine Providence, in any instance, to destroy but to cherish that which is good in the human heart,—even when that good exists in the smallest measure,—and, it may be, in conjunction with much that is of a different character. It is, on this account, that God has revealed himself not only as a Being who passeth by iniquity, and is not strict to take vengeance for sin,—but as a being who is disposed to favour and to support, by the aids of his Spirit, every good inclination or submissive purpose which the heart of man, amidst all its feebleness and errors, may be disposed to entertain,—and from this consideration of the fostering and directing care of Divine Providence, the afflicted may derive the purest consolation, amidst sorrows, which, otherwise, might tempt them to think that they had been abandoned by God.

I. For, in the first place, on looking back upon life, the afflicted must be aware, that there have often been times, when a dark cloud seemed to overhang the way, in which it was their purpose to have proceeded,—when circumstances seemed to thicken around them, and to entangle them on.

every side,—and when they knew not what course to take, that they might most securely attain to the end which they had purposed. But they must also be aware, that, in all such moments, their truest wisdom and best security lie in committing their way, with implicit trust, to the good counsel of God,—in waiting, with an observant but humble and obedient mind, for those *hints* which the course of his Providence might furnish, respecting the path it was most for their welfare to take,—and in not doubting, that if they thus committed the issue of their ways unto him, he would finally lead them to that which was right. Now, this patient waiting for the *directing* Providence of God, they must at the same time recollect, never failed to be eventually blessed,—or that the courses of Divine Providence were imperceptibly so shaped as to bring them from darkness into perfect light,—and give them reason to bless God that he “had established their feet, and brought them from the miry clay,”—and shed a clear and beautiful light around all their paths. And, if God thus never failed to guide them by the courses of his Providence, and the operations of his Spirit, during the previous portions of their journey, surely, they have no reason to think, that he means to desert them when they are arrived at that point where their darkness is greatest, and their uncertainty most perplexing,—when they are passing through the “valley of the shadow of death,”—and when, therefore, more than during any preceding part of their journey, it is necessary that “his Spirit should guide them,”—“that his rod and staff should support them.”

2. There have been other times when the progress of life has seemed to present to the afflicted a different aspect,—times, when they cannot but

recollect, that amidst health, and warm hopes, and earnest desires, they had *distinctly* marked out for themselves the path which they believed to be most for their interest to pursue,—but when, also, the Providence of God seemed to delight in *thwarting* all their schemes,—and in leading them, contrary to their own wishes and their own perceptions of what was useful for them, into other courses of activity or of trial. And however much they may have regretted such hindrances at the time of their occurrence,—however hard they may have imagined the conduct of Divine Providence towards them to be,—they must also recollect, that the progress of events never failed to satisfy them, that they had really mistaken the course that was most suited to their welfare,—that God, whose good Providence never utterly forsakes those who trust in him, had chosen infinitely better for them, than they had done for themselves,—and that he was, indeed, giving them the highest proofs of his care at the very moment, and by the very means, which they had considered as most ominous of their ruin. And, if God thus overruled their shortsightedness,—and thwarted their foolish schemes,—only to do them good, in the past courses of his Providence,—surely, it is ingratitude, and want of true wisdom to believe, that in calling them into trouble at the termination of life,—and seeming to break up all their earthly plans, and forcibly to lead them into lasting difficulty,—he has a purpose different from that which has characterized all the previous parts of his merciful and good conduct towards them;—it is surely not only more for their happiness, but a better proof of true wisdom in them to believe, that this apparent breaking up of all their present enjoyments and schemes, is only preparatory to some signal mani-

festation of that infinite wisdom and loving-kindness by which all the parts of the divine dispensations have been pervaded,—and in this belief to commit themselves, with fearless security, to the ultimate issues of that scheme, which will not fail, if they are not wanting to themselves, eventually to lead them “into perfect day.”

3. Still further, in looking back upon life, the afflicted cannot but recollect, that not only was there a pure joy of the heart connected with the indulgence of all Christian graces—even of those graces that seem to be most humiliating to man—such as patience,—forbearance,—self-denial,—and contrition,—and that this joy ought to be regarded as an earnest and pledge of that perfect happiness with which, in a greater and more enduring state of being, higher measures of purity are to be rewarded,—but more particularly, that the good affections, and submissive purposes, and holy aspirations which they cherished in time,—and it may be in seasons of difficulty and of darkness,—never failed eventually to lead to their appropriate reward when the counsel of Providence had reached its accomplishment, and present obstacles had gradually disappeared. It is, indeed, true, that God often calls men thus to “sow in tears,” when he intends that they should “reap in joy,”—or, that he shows them the *duty* of exercising many graces and virtues, while, amidst severe distress, and a dark overclouding of all their prospects, they can see *only the duty* of such conduct, without being able to trace any good consequences, to which such purifying of their affections, and establishing of these purposes, on their part, is likely to lead. But though they may have been unable to perceive these issues of their conduct, it has not been the less true, that God has never overlooked, or failed

to mark down in his book of remembrance, even the most secret of their purposes, and the least observed of their tears,—that, on the contrary, those private exercises of a pure or contrite heart, from which they least expected any important results, and which they cherished, solely, from a sense of the *duty* which they owed to God, have frequently been those very parts of their conduct from which they have afterwards been able to trace the most important consequences,—and that God has, thus, seemed to teach them in the most impressive and pleasing of all ways,—not only that his eye is at all moments marking the most secret movements of their hearts,—but that it is part of his plan, eventually, to give full effect, though it may be at a time, and by a series of means, which human foresight is unable to anticipate, to every thing that man does, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

And, surely, if we have found our virtues as well as our vices thus producing their appropriate fruits in all past times,—and even when at the moment of their exercise they seemed least likely to lead to any desirable results,—we ought not to doubt, that whatever good purposes,—or holy aspirations,—or secret feelings of contrition may occupy our hearts,—during those least propitious of all hours,—when sore anguish of body and of mind announce to us that the termination of all our earthly plans is at hand,—will also lead to some results, though our eye cannot now perceive their connexion,—or that the kindly breath which has fostered and brought to maturity our most secret graces in time, will not be denied to us, or blow over us without effect, when, on the verge of an eternal world, we are giving, by the earnest exercise of the same

graces, the last testimony of our obedience to the will of God.

In short, if we are conscious, that during the part of our lives which is past, God has, in any measure, been carrying on a good work in us, we ought not to doubt, that he who has thus wrought in us, will not leave his purpose without its due accomplishment,—and that, though we may not, amidst sore distress, and all the disheartening and darkening circumstances with which the near prospect of death is attended, be able to trace the operation of his Spirit in bettering our hearts, and in carrying on the work which we fancied to have been begun,—that work is not the less, on that account, actually in progress, and God will in his own good time, “perfect that which concerneth us.”

And these convictions,—and these retrospective views of life, and of the past conduct of Divine Providence towards us, are the more to be indulged,—because it sometimes happens that the sufferings which precede dissolution, are of a kind which seem rather fitted to pervert, and to harden, and to break down the heart, than to give it that kindly and purifying discipline which, to us, seems the best preparation for our future condition. There are, indeed, troubles which humble, and purify the affections, and gradually release our hold of every thing on earth,—and inspire us with earnest desires after a better state of being,—and thus prepare the soul for bidding a calm and triumphant farewell to every thing on earth, from a pleasing anticipation that its earthly trials are but preparatory to its entrance on “an eternal weight of glory.” And such troubles, when accompanied

with such effects, are no doubt among the greatest blessings that can be given to men in this world,—present death under an aspect peculiarly beautiful,—and form altogether such an assemblage of circumstances as every man would wish to characterize the last hours of his own connexion with time.

But it is not thus that God often deals even with those whom he most loves, and on whom he intends to bestow his choicest blessings. For, sometimes, irritation of mind and of body, continued for long months or years, deny to the sufferer any exercise of those calm affections which seem to us so beautiful as earnestness of the rest that remains for the people of God ;—often, the body is tried with sore pain,—and wearisome months and days are appointed unto man before he is released from his trial,—when he lies down, he says, “ Oh that it were Morning,”—and when he rises up, he seems to himself as but a mark against which the fierce arrows of the wrath of God are directed,—and thus while other men are running their race with joy,—and multitudes, even of the dying, are meeting their last hours with composure, and looking forward to death with pleasing expectation,—his lot seems to be the endurance of sorrows, which have a tendency only to lessen him in his own estimation,—and to blunt, or lower, or pervert whatever parts of his nature seemed to him most excellent, or most fitted to offer by their cultivation an earnest of his title to the “ inheritance of the just made perfect.” On these accounts the sufferer may sometimes be disposed to think that God has, indeed, set him as a mark for his fierce arrows,—and that, as he has no hope of deliverance in this world, he has no right to expect that even his release from the sufferings of time, shall find his

spirit prepared, *by anything it has undergone during its last hours*, for entering on that "rest which remains for the children of God."

These, however, are thoughts in which the afflicted may be greatly mistaken,—and it is in the proper management of such cases that the excellence and value of an enlightened Comforter of the afflicted may be perceived. To those, then, who are oppressed by such thoughts, and are overwhelmed by the endurance of such calamities, it may safely be represented, by the conscientious and discreet Minister of Christ,—in the first place—That the very best of men have met death amidst sufferings similar to those which now awaken all their fears, and, it may be, overwhelm them with despair,—that even the Beloved Son of God, when he appeared as the Representative of human nature, endured such sorrows before his decease, as made him in the anticipation of prophecy, cry out, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,"—his death, indeed, was not only painful and humiliating, but was enhanced in its misery by the scorn and indignation of those who witnessed his sorrows,—so that he seemed to be a man, "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,"—even his own words, while enduring such sorrows, were these very remarkable ones, "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?"—and we are entitled to believe that God thus seemed to set him as the mark of his displeasure, to instruct all future partakers of human nature, that if his Beloved Son was thus humbled and brought low, in his utmost need, we have no reason to conclude, merely from the severity of the trials amidst which our departure from life takes place, that, on that account, we have been

deserted by the love, or by the favouring Providence of God.

It ought, secondly, to be represented to those who are suffering under peculiar humiliation, that God has purposes in view, by our trials, which we are incapable, in any instance, of fully comprehending,—that his plan, in our history, embraces events that are far removed from our present sphere of observation, and relations of our destiny to that of other beings with whose existence even we are unacquainted,—so that there may be a preparation going forward, with respect to us, in our apparently most humiliating sorrows, for such scenes and such future connexions of our immortal career, as will far more than compensate to us for any present distresses,—and may even show them to have been transcendent proofs of the peculiar favour of God.

In the third place, it may be represented to such sufferers, that we are very imperfect judges of our own characters, and often pronounce that to be beneficial for us which is really hurtful,—and that to be evil, which if we better knew our own hearts, we should own to be good,—so that while God seems to us, by our sufferings, to be only destroying what was good and noble in our nature, he may, in reality, be only rooting out vices of which we were not sufficiently aware,—or awakening virtues of humility and submission, which constituted our chief wants, as beings destined “to be made perfect.”

Lastly, and above all, it ought to be represented to such humiliated sufferers,—that if they are conscious that goodness and mercy have followed them during all the previous portions of their abode upon this earth,—that God has uniformly shown himself to them as a Being who delights to bring

good out of evil,—and especially, if they are conscious that the Spirit of God, by the dispensations of his Providence, has been working with their spirits in those calmer, and, as they think, better days, to which they now look back with desire, they may rest assured that God has not ceased his work, though they may be incapable, amidst the darkness of present circumstances, of tracing the workings of his hands, or the proofs of his design,—and that their present trouble and great humiliation are but working out for them,—in the good time which Divine Providence has set, and by the slowly but surely evolved procedure of his plans, “an exceeding weight of glory.” Indeed, the deeper the humiliation, into which those who thus have served God in life, are permitted to fall before their departure from it, the more probable is it, that God has in reserve for them some signally glorious reversion, when their present trouble has passed,—and their spirits have entered on another,—a more comprehensive,—and more enduring scene.

VIII.

CONSIDERATIONS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE PATIENCE
UNDER SEVERE PAIN.

PSALM lvi. 8. *Put thou my tears into thy bottle :
are they not in thy book ?*

It not unfrequently happens, that the months or years which precede our departure from life, are marked by the endurance of sufferings of a

peculiarly painful kind,—and which try to the uttermost the powers of endurance with which our nature is gifted. It is, indeed, often oppressive to the feelings even of those who only witness the trial, to observe how hardly the best of men seem thus, during their last hours, to be dealt with,—and, hence, it becomes a great duty to communicate to the sufferers, such views as are fitted to sustain, in so far as human nature, amidst cruel torments, can be sustained, the hearts of those, on whom the hand of Providence is thus heavily laid.

With this view, then, the afflicted ought to endeavour to keep in mind, in the first place,—that no affliction falls upon man but by the righteous appointment of God,—that in the words of Scripture, “not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his permission,”—“that the hairs of our heads are all numbered,”—and that if we have reason to believe that even our daily blessings are from his hand, much more reason have we to conclude, that no sharp or long continued pain can have made part of our lot, but by a particular act of his righteous will.

In the second place,—that during the continuance of our pains, their most secret and evanescent parts are perfectly known unto God,—as well as the manner in which we conduct ourselves during their continuance,—so that even in the dark and silent watches of the night, when no eye of man is awake to notice our agonies, there is not a pang that wrings our hearts, nor a pain in the finest fibre of our frame, that is not marked by that Omniscient eye, which “never slumbers nor sleeps.” Our sorrows and pains, indeed, often seem to ourselves to come and to depart without any counsel or purpose,—and on this account they

appear to us, not unfrequently, too heavy to be borne,—but we may rest assured that every part of our distress is well known unto God,—that all our tears are treasured up in his book of remembrance,—and that he will, in his own good time, recompense us according to our endurance.

In the third place,—that there is something peculiarly beautiful, and applauded by all men, in the conduct of him, who, from a sense of the submission which he owes to God, bears extreme or long-continued pain with fortitude.

In the fourth place,—that by giving way to impatience we not only rebel against Providence,—and lessen the dignity of our own characters,—but add to the irritation and violence of the calamity under which we are suffering.

In the last place,—that as our calamity came from God,—whatever may have been the subordinate instruments which he saw fit to employ for producing it,—and as, during its continuance, it is known unto him in all its parts,—he, also, has his own time and way of bringing it to a termination,—that that time and way are the best in which it can be finished, when the whole extent of our history, and all the purposes of our trial, are taken into account,—and that it is only because we cannot thus extend our view to all the parts of our existence, and relations of our endurance, that we presume to dictate unto God what he should do for us,—or in what time and way our affliction should be removed.

In many cases, these considerations, strongly and habitually actuating the mind, may enable the sufferer to support himself with patience amidst trials which, to those who witness them, may seem too strong or too long continued for flesh and blood,—and he who, amidst such suffer-

ings, feels himself so strengthened by God, ought to accept such consolation as a token of good, and devoutly to pour forth his thanksgivings for so signal a favour.

But there are pains too violent and too irritating to be subdued even by such thoughts, and when "the spirit is willing, though the flesh is weak," the sufferer ought not to be too much cast down, or to despair of final favour, though he should not be able to realize, in his conduct, that calmness of endurance which, with a trial more proportioned to his strength, it would be his happiness and pride to display.

IX.

CONSIDERATIONS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE SUBMISSION
AS TO THE TIME OF OUR DEPARTURE.

JOB vii. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?*

THERE are various delusive thoughts, which the self-love of men is apt to suggest to them, as reasons why their existence upon this earth should be continued, beyond the term which Divine Providence, by the infliction of deadly disease, seems to have set to it in their individual cases.

In the *first* place, they seem about to be cut off before the number of the days that have been allotted unto man have been accomplished,—and it appears to them a hard thing that they should thus be doomed to perish, it may be, in the midst

of their years. But it ought to be kept in mind by the sick, that as there was a set time for our coming into life, in order that we might meet with the very circumstances and companions that have constituted us what we actually have been,—so is there a critical moment for our departure from this world, that we may enter upon a future and invisible scene, at the precise time, when the arrangements of Divine Providence for our appearance on that scene shall be most favourable for our admission into it. It is also a part of the plan of Providence, in his dealings with men, that they should depart from this world at all stages of their progress through it,—so that, while the greater number die in early life, or in the midst of their days, but a small portion are permitted to see the threescore and ten years which make up the extreme course of our days; and God has kept in his own hand, at what particular point of our progress the journey of any individual is to terminate.

Indeed, it has been strikingly remarked, that so much is there of sovereignty, on the part of God in this portion of his dealings with men,—and so earnestly does he seem bent on keeping their minds alive to the uncertainty of their days,—that he often calls men away from life in the very midst of those schemes on which their earthly hopes had been most set,—or, it may be, when they were about to enter on their last and greatest project, and when, by its accomplishment, they expected to have crowned all their former labours with success.

In the *second* place, men often think that they could yet do much good to mankind,—or be instrumental in giving a greater extension to the kingdom of God upon earth,—and they readily delude themselves with the belief, that from this

fancied importance of their labours, God will still find need of their services in his kingdom.

All this, however, proceeds from an exaggerated opinion which men are apt to form of their own importance in the divine kingdom.—It ought also to be kept in mind, even by him who seems to have most reason for indulging such thoughts, that God has an infinity of instruments, at his disposal, for the accomplishment of his purposes,—that the earth will not be forsaken though we should be taken away,—but, that as God saw fit to raise us to the place which we have occupied, and to do that portion of service which we have already done, the same Almighty power can call other servants into his vineyard, who may be endowed with equal or with greater powers for the production of good.—And still farther, it ought to be kept in mind by us, that—if we really feel the ambition of being useful servants of God, and are not rather deluding ourselves by our own self-love and weak fears, while we but fancy that our ambition is of a more exalted kind,—God can provide us with more extensive means of promoting the interests of his universal kingdom, in some greater portion of his boundless empire,—or that, in heaven, there will be abundant opportunities, and, indeed, far greater and more extensive opportunities than we now enjoy, for the accomplishment of whatever good we are capable of doing to those grand interests of the moral dominions of God, with which we cannot cease to be connected,—and where those who have faithfully employed the “five talents intrusted to them in time, shall be made the rulers over five cities.”

In the same delusive spirit, men often express an anxious wish to live, that they may see more of the progress of the divine dispensations upon

earth,—and be gratified by the observation of the success of those schemes, in the origination or progress of which, it may be, they have already taken a sincere and warm interest.

But, surely, the kingdom of God and his dispensations are not limited to those comparatively imperfect disclosures of them that are observed to be going forward upon this earth. On the contrary, the divine kingdom is one grand scheme, extending, under different manifestations of it, throughout all space and all duration,—and those who have loved to see the progress of the kingdom of God upon this earth, and have done well the part assigned them in promoting the interests of that kingdom, shall only be admitted, when they have closed their eyes upon all temporal arrangements, to a far grander and more extensive view of those wise,—and good,—and beautiful dispensations, which, as higher parts of the same universal scheme, will be evolved throughout eternity.

But, *thirdly*, your ambition, perhaps, is of a less exalted kind,—you have children, it may be, or dependants, in whose welfare you are deeply interested,—and you anxiously wish to be continued in life, that you may be the means of providing for those who are dear to you. The wish is, no doubt, a natural one,—but have you not experienced, in *your own* case, that “God has never left you nor forsaken you,”—that he has, indeed, manifested himself, by all his conduct, to have been, towards you, a *providing* God,—and is it not, to have learned but little from all this goodness, to doubt, that if God sees fit to call you out of life, he will also become, in your place, the Friend and Protector of those whom you are forced, by his Providence, to cast upon *his* care.

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Still *farther*, you, perhaps, feel regret at the idea of leaving the many peculiar enjoyments that make up your portion in this world,—and you think it hard, that, having so many sources of gratification above other men, you should be forced to forego them all,—and to bid adieu to a world in which you have had so goodly an inheritance. But these enjoyments and advantages existed and were partaken of by other men before you knew of their existence, or were in a condition to appreciate them,—however long, too, you may live, myriads are yet to come forth who are destined to taste the same blessings, after your course has been finished,—and, above all, he who sees fit to call you from your present blessings, can far more than compensate to you for their loss in some greater scene, for which your improved powers of enjoyment are about to be prepared.

Lastly, there are men, who have not so much any objection to die, as a wish that they might be preserved a little longer, till they have attained a better assurance of Divine favour, and a more comfortable hope of eternal happiness. But God has his own time both for our entrance into life and for our departure from it,—and he chooses not so much to wait for our wishes on this subject, as to try our *obedience* by calling us, it may be, at the moment, when we least expected the call, or would most willingly put it off,—he chooses, perhaps, to advance us to our reward, from amidst the very depth of the affliction, with which he has seen fit to try us,—at any rate, his purposes and his wisdom, in so great a dispensation, are far above the reach of our present thoughts—and our happiness and duty consist in bowing implicitly to his will, and in not presuming to judge for ourselves, in a matter—of such high moment, and all the

consequences and relations of which, to our eternal welfare, we are incapable of estimating.

In general, it ought to be kept in mind by us upon this subject, that there is great wisdom and beauty in that arrangement, by means of which Divine Providence has determined that the time and manner of our departure from this world shall be at the disposal, not of man, but of God.

What a miserable thing, indeed, would it have been for man,—what mischiefs and confusion would it have occasioned, had the arrangements of Providence been different,—and men had been left to decide, in so important a matter, according to their own notions of propriety,—or even according to the impulse of their own caprices and vexations ! For the life of every man, in this world, is connected with arrangements which are prepared for him, in that invisible state, on which he has yet to enter,—and had we been left to our own choice, the unhappy would then have gone from this state, while the *best time* for their reception in another had not yet arrived,—and before, indeed, the purposes of their existence, in the present state, had been completed,—many men having been very unhappy, and brought even to the gates of death, who have yet lived to see much good, and to do many excellent services to the cause of God upon earth. Even the good man, in a moment of sore irritation might have resigned his hope,—and lost much of the benefit of his former fidelity.

On the other hand, the prosperous and the sensual would never think of leaving this world, but in spite of all representations of propriety and duty, would cleave to their present enjoyments for ever.

In so important a matter, God has, therefore, with most beautiful wisdom, kept the times and the manner of our departure in his own hand,—and the duty of every man is to wait, even amidst the severest trials, till that time has come,—since not a pain that we feel, nor a tear that we shed, is unknown to God,—and his time for our removal is the only one that is, in all respects, suited to our permanent welfare.

Hence it is, that God so often tries men, by permitting them to “wish for death when they cannot find it,”—and that, on the other hand, they as often wish to delay his approach, while he presses on them with resistless power.

Hence, also, we may perceive the great impropriety and guilt of judging for ourselves in so important a matter. In the ordinary course of life, the man who struggles, *bravely*, with some great calamity, commonly betters his condition, after his patience has had its “perfect work,”—while he, who, in a moment of fretfulness, deserts his station, as commonly but involves himself in still greater disasters. We have no reason to judge differently respecting the last and greatest trial that has been appointed for us in life. Those who *fail* in it have the earnest of a yet greater failure, for which their impatience has destined them,—they cast themselves, *voluntarily*, as it has been strikingly said, on some “uncomfortable spot in the universe,”—while those, who endure to the end, have a pledge, in their endurance, of a happy reversion to all their sorrows,—and the greater and more continued their sufferings, provided they have been well sustained, the more confidently may this assurance of an eventual recompense be entertained.

X

CONSIDERATIONS CALCULATED TO LESSEN THE FEAR OF DEATH.

PSALM xxiii. 4. *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*

IN the first place, *all* men die,—and death, therefore, cannot be regarded as, in itself, an evil, but only as part of that mysterious, but good and wise plan, which Divine Providence has appointed for the final perfecting of his works. It is, also, in this view, but part of the inheritance to which all were born,—and we should, consequently, accept it, with the same trust and thankfulness, with which we have seen reason to meet all the other portions of our history. Above all, this consideration ought to teach us, that, in leaving this world, we are going “not to the dead but to the living,”—to the innumerable Company of all times and of all countries, who now people the invisible dominions of God,—to the Prophets, and Apostles, and Wise Men, and Saints, who were, in their day, “the Excellent Ones of the earth,”—and who, like us, left this world, not that they might resign the enjoyment of existence, but that they might join the countless Host of the Spiritual Kingdom of God.

In the second place, men obviously meet their last hours under very different circumstances,—some being cut off suddenly,—others by slow and almost imperceptible decay,—a few amidst pleasing anticipations of the happiness which is reserved

for the good in a better world,—and many, amidst sore or long-continued irritation, of body or of mind.

No conclusion, however, can be drawn from these varieties, respecting either the character of any individual or his future prospects,—for those who have seen many such varieties must have remarked, that the worst of men sometimes meet death with unconcern, or are *suddenly* called to their account,—while the most exemplary characters are subjected to long and humiliating distress,—and meet the moment of their departure under the pressure of much awful uncertainty.

These varieties depend, in a great degree, on the nature of the disease which has been appointed to cut us off,—some complaints being productive of a calm and subdued tone of mind,—while others, as naturally, are accompanied by great anxiety, and try the patience of the sufferer to the uttermost.

But, in all these things, God has a great work going forward with the souls which he has made, which we are incapable of fully comprehending,—and there are relations of our present distresses and of the mode of our departure from this world, to the future events of our history,—and to the honour or the shame we are hereafter to inherit, which it is not possible that we should understand, unless the whole extent of our existence were laid open to us,—so that what seems to us most hard and ominous, when our attention is limited by that short portion of our existence which is connected with this world, may be productive of benefits of the highest and most enduring kind, when the entire range of our history is taken into account,—and thus while the bad may only be called, by an easy release from this world, to melan-

choly prospects and painful endurances in a greater scene,—the afflictions which have sorely tried the hearts of the good, may be working out for them “an eternal weight of glory.”

For the same reason we should not be hasty in considering the lamentations of nature as signs of impatience,—but should rather believe, that he who sorely tries the hearts of his creatures, knows also the measure of endurance of which their nature is capable, and, in no case, demands more of man than he has been made capable of performing.

In the third place, we are apt to suppose that the mere pains of dissolution must be of a peculiarly awful kind,—and that those agonies and convulsions which betoken expiring nature, indicate, also, some dreadful endurance which the living principle is undergoing. But it has been wisely and justly remarked by those best acquainted with our bodily frame, that, in all probability, the man who has recovered from a serious disease has suffered more than the man who has fallen a victim to it,—the suffering being occasioned by the *struggles* of nature with the malady that was oppressing it,—and not by the *victory* which that malady, in any case, has gained. The convulsions and dying agonies are, probably, but involuntary movements,—and however fearful to those who witness them,—are not really greater than similar convulsions which often occur in the case of the living,—and which depart from them without leaving any consciousness, in the sufferer, of the melancholy state to which he had been reduced.

In the fourth place, the humiliating *circumstances* that attend our departure from this world,—and the melancholy *rites* that have a place in it,—the cold grave,—the narrow coffin,—and the

pale shroud,—derive all their influence, on our thoughts, from an illusion of our imaginations. We fancy that we shall still be in a condition, after life is extinct, to mourn over the humiliation into which our mortal part has fallen,—and we thus extend our present feelings and views to that time, and to that condition of our nature, when all sense and all imagination shall have perished.

It is, on the other hand, a beautiful view which has been given us in Scripture of our last rest,—and one which it must be peculiarly consolatory to the imaginations of the dying to make familiar to their thoughts,—when it speaks of the grave as a *bed* of repose prepared for man after the labours and anxieties of his day of life,—as a quiet *sleep* upon the bosom of a friend to whom we may commit all our cares with security,—and as a *lying down* from the fatigues of this mortal journey, in the blessed and assured hope of a joyful Morning which is hereafter to dawn upon all “who are at rest.” “For,” says the Apostle, “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, them also that *sleep* in Jesus will God bring with him.”

Another circumstance which renders the prospect of death awful, is the apprehended greatness of the *change* to which it introduces us,—and the unknown nature of that country and of that state of being on which, when we leave this world, we must enter. And, it is no doubt, a solemn and an awful thing to encounter so great a change—and every considerate man will pray with all the fervour of his spirit, that he may not advance to such an untried condition without a becoming regard to the awfulness of his prospects. Still, we ought not to forget, even amidst such solemn thoughts,—that we have already had abundant evidence of the Fatherly care, and of the benevolent plans of

that Being who gave us our place in life,—and who has hitherto conducted us, through a *variety* of scenes, in each of which we have found suitable accommodation provided for us,—and many rich tokens of the condescending mercy with which he furnishes the abodes of his creatures. We ought not, consequently, to suppose, that that untried scene, on which we are about to enter, will be characterized by less care on the part of God, or by fewer accommodations suited to our altered nature,—but, rather, that we are about to be admitted to a still wider view of the dominions of God,—and to a richer experience of that bounty with which, after the endurance of sore trouble, he blesses the glorified spirits of his children. And, with such convictions, we should be ready to adopt the beautiful words of the Psalmist,—“The Lord has been my Shepherd, and I shall not want,—he has led me by green pastures and still waters. Though I walk, therefore, through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,—for he is with me, his rod and staff they comfort me. Goodness and mercy have followed me all my days,—and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

“But, in the last place,” says the Apostle, “the sting of death is sin,”—and men fear to die, because they are apprehensive of the consequences of that *Account* which they must render unto God, “for all the deeds done by them in the body.” And it certainly is not the part of any judicious Instructor of the dying, to flatter the self-love of man by instilling hopes that are not warranted by the previous character of the individual, or by the declarations of Scripture respecting the strictness of that retribution which shall come to all men for the deeds done by them in life. At the same

time, it is our duty to represent to the *Sick*,—and to bear at all times on our own minds,—that the Almighty has made it the purpose of all his dispensations to instruct mankind that “he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live,”—that there is no moment of life, at which a sincere call for pardon will be met on the part of God with utter rejection,—but rather, that like the Father who saw his prodigal son returning to his home, from the utmost depth of his despair,—the Almighty has been represented, in the divine words of the Saviour, as saying of *his* repentant Son, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him,—and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.—and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it,—and let us drink and be merry—for this my son was dead, and is alive again,—he was lost, and is found.”

XI.

IN WHAT MANNER, OR WITH WHAT SPIRIT, DEATH
SHOULD BE MET.

MATT. xxiii. 46. *Father, into thy hands I commend
my spirit.*

IN the first place, it is evident, that Death ought not to be met with *levity*, or with any pretences of despising its awfulness,—for it is the most fearful of all the events we can be called to encounter,—not merely from the change which it produces in

our mortal part,—and from the many fears and agonies with which its arrival is attended,—but from the unspeakable importance, to our final well-being or misery, of those untried but enduring scenes, to which, in the plan of Divine Providence, it is destined to introduce us. Even in the ordinary changes of life, there is admitted impropriety and a sure omen of unhappiness, in the conduct of him, who advances to any important alteration or trial without solemn preparation, or with the unthinking and daring liberty of a presumptuous spirit,—and, on the other hand, it is acknowledged to be a matter of great propriety, and never fails to be attended with good consequences, when we are about to meet with any event of moment, that we should summon up all our powers of reflection,—and should humbly commit ourselves with due preparation, to the favouring providence of God. And if this be the conduct that is most suitable, even in the lesser changes of our history, how sinful must be the conduct of those who rush upon their last trial without serious consideration, and seem voluntarily to relinquish all title to the character of reflecting and serious-minded men, at a time when God is calling them to the most solemn of all endurances, and is about to bestow on them the appropriate consequences of all that they have done in life!

But though death ought not to be met with unconcern, neither is it met, in the most becoming spirit, when the heart of him who is about to encounter it, is assailed by unmanly *fears*, or even when there is any *distrust* of that good Providence which has followed us all our days with loving-kindness and tender mercy. It is in the indulgence of such fears, indeed, and such distrust, that men are most apt to err in this matter, so that

death has been emphatically styled the King of Terrors—and most men are said to be all their lifetime subject to bondage, through fear of death. But to allay such fears, it ought to be recollected, that death, as well as all the other parts of our history, is the appointment of a Being who can have nothing in view, in his dispensations, but the welfare of his creatures,—that all men,—the good as well as the bad,—have yielded to death,—and that it neither altogether terminates our existence, nor takes us out of the dominion of the good Providence of God,—but, on the contrary, is only one of those great Changes through which our mortal nature is destined to pass,—and our introduction to some greater scene, where the dispensations of Providence shall be unfolded either in a more glorious or more awful—but at all events,—in a more enduring form.

Presumption is one of the most unbecoming states of mind in which any man can be found,—for so complicated are the motives of all human actions, than the heart of man is an unfathomable mystery even to himself,—and so convinced was one of the greatest of modern writers of this truth,—that, in a poetical character which he has drawn of himself, he has declared himself incapable of saying whether he was something singularly good and noble, or whether, on the contrary, he was utterly despicable and worthless,—and he has concluded his scrutiny by these memorable words,—“That in order to have this mystery solved, he must die,”—that is to say, he must wait till the change which death was to introduce into his condition should show him what

had been the real character which he has sustained in life.

Indeed, every man is a compound of good and of bad qualities,—much that is evil or questionable lurks at the bottom of the best actions, even of those who consider themselves to be the Excellent ones of the earth,—and it does not, consequently, become any man to presume too much for himself as to his future state,—for while he believes himself to be something that is singularly good and praiseworthy, he may, in reality, be only miserably deluding himself by a misapprehension of his qualities, and may be worthy only of a very subordinate place in the divine kingdom.

We may carry this remark still farther, and assert, that so imperfect is the knowledge of their own character, even of those who have made it the object of their most careful study, that if we shall be able, amidst the new arrangements of our future state, to compare the condition in which we shall then be individually placed, with what we supposed to have been our characters in time,—there is no man who will not have reason to wonder at the condition to which he has at last arrived,—while, at the same time, he is lost in admiration at the depths of that wisdom which has finally fixed him in a condition in all respects suited to his real character on earth.

Presumption is then a foolish misconception of our own characters and real worth,—but on the other hand, *despair* is a sin of great magnitude against God,—for he has revealed himself, by all his conduct, to be a Being who is actuated by a tender regard towards all his creatures, and who earnestly calls all men to come to him by repentance,—and, indeed, so black is this guilt, that a state of utter desperation is commonly understood

to be not only the chief misery, but the last evidence of extreme worthlessness in the condition of those who are finally reprobate.

There is, then, an essential difference between *Despair* and the deepest *Humiliation* for the evils we have committed,—for contrition never works with any kindly effect upon the human heart, nor is it, indeed, of the true kind, except when it is accompanied and purified by an apprehension and hope of divine *Mercy*.

Death, then, ought to be met neither with unbecoming *levity*, nor with unmanly *fear*,—neither with a presumptuous confidence in our own worth, nor with an impious and gloomy distrust of the benevolence of God,—but with much solemnity of feeling, as the most important of all the events that can happen to us, and the most momentous in its consequences to our final happiness,—with a becoming attention to all acts of propriety and manly decency,—with a steadfast and unfeigned exercise of all Christian graces,—and, above all, with such confidence in the righteous dispensations of Providence, as may show that we consider it to be the last test afforded us by God, of the faith with which we have learnt to commit ourselves to all his appointments.

A *placid* death is no doubt one of the most beautiful and instructive sights which this world can present,—for God and all good Angels seem then to be welcoming the departing Spirit to its reward, and bestowing on it, even before it leaves this world, an earnest of the blessedness that awaits it in a better;—and this, accordingly, is that kind of death which every person must

most anxiously wish for himself;—for who has not often said with the sacred writer,—“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace,”—“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?”

There are even instances of men departing from the trials of this life not merely with composure, but with *triumphant* anticipation of the glory that awaits them,—and who have exclaimed with the Apostle, “Now am I ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand,—I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me at that day,—and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing.—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—the sting of death is sin,—and the strength of sin is the law,—but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “And I know and am persuaded, that neither suffering, nor reproach, nor life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

But though a *placid* and sometimes even a *triumphant* death have been displayed by some of those who have done well the task assigned them in life, and who have thus seemed to receive, even in Time, a portion of the reward that awaited them in Eternity,—yet neither of these kinds of death makes part of the most common lot assigned unto men,—nor does God always grant either of them, even to those who have done their part most conscientiously, and who have borne the hardest

struggles with the most exemplary propriety. On the contrary, God has reserved them, like the other tokens of his favour, to be conferred at the time, and in the way, which, to his infinite wisdom, seems best,—and he often calls even the best beloved of his children to himself from the midst of great tribulation,—or from what seem to them to be fearful hidings of his fatherly countenance. In all this there is a great mystery of Providence, which has a connexion with future and greater portions of the divine dispensations towards his immortal offspring,—but which is not indicative either of the characters of those who so suffer, or of their future station in the divine dominions,—and, therefore, without being cast down because our last hours are not passed either in calm enjoyment or in triumphant anticipation, we should think it sufficient, if we are able, like our Redeemer, and like the first Martyr of the faith, to say, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

OF THE VALUE OF A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

PSALM lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?*

THIS being a subject, the right apprehension of which is of much importance,—and respecting which many false, and vague, and contradictory opinions are current in the world,—the Author meant to have illustrated his ideas on it at considerable length,—from a belief, that, by so doing, he might be able to give some more correct and satisfactory apprehensions to the minds of the afflicted than those they commonly meet with.

The preceding observations, however, have extended to such an unexpected length,—and have occupied so much of a work which ought to be as concise as possible, that the Author can now only offer a short illustration or statement of some of the principles which should enter into our calculations in judging of this matter. He trusts, however, that these statements may be sufficient to explain his own views,—and to afford materials of just and consolatory thought to those who are interested in obtaining a satisfactory apprehension of the subject under examination.

There are several *distinct* questions, which are apt to be confounded with each other in discourses on this subject,—and with the separation of which from the chief point to be determined, it is, therefore, proper that the Author should commence his statements.

The question, then, is *not*, in the first place, whether a person who is in health, and is running a course of vice, may trust to a death-bed repentance.

For, 1. Sudden and premature deaths are more common, than those which occur after the utmost lapse of the years allotted to human existence has been completed,—we, accordingly, see Death every where marking out his victims, and calling the healthy and the vigorous to their last account, much more frequently than those who are bowed down with years and infirmities,—and no man, therefore, whatever may be the strength of his constitution, or the measure of health which, at any moment, he enjoys, is entitled to presume that he shall escape the stroke which is cutting off others, with equal advantages, on all sides of him,—or, to defer a work of so much importance as that of his preparation for death, on a supposition, which he has so little reason to believe will be justified by the event.

2. Even supposing a man to attain to an extreme old age, or to something approaching to that term which has been assigned to the years of man on this earth,—it is much more probable that the concluding years of such a life will be spent, either in a state of complete exhaustion of all the powers both of mind and of body, or in the endurance of violent and most harassing distress,—than that they will find the individual in the possession of so much self-command, and in such a becoming

state of composure as is necessary for any effectual performance of the great and paramount duty of preparing himself to appear before his Creator and Judge.

3. If, however, we should suppose an individual both to attain to a *good* old age, and to spend his last years in a state of comparative freedom from violent disease, still he has no right to presume, that any feelings of repentance which he may then choose to indulge, shall be of the genuine and acceptable kind,—it is much more likely, that they may be only the result of his *fears* influencing his imagination, and rather degrading his heart than rendering it better, and purer, and more submissive to God and goodness than it was at any former period of his life;—at least, it is presumptuous in any man to expect, that, as he never could bring his mind to any just feelings of repentance, during his past years of health and happiness, he shall be able to summon up such feelings, in their genuine character, when so many counteracting and harassing sensations, of another kind, must conspire in depriving him of this power;—and, on all these accounts, it is manifestly most improper in any man who is at present in health, and is going on in a course of vice, to flatter himself with the hope, that a death-bed repentance may ever so much as be put in his power.

But neither, in the second place, is the question at issue, what God can do or has done, in any particular instances,—but *what*, in the ordinary course of things,—and from the known operations of the human mind, we are entitled to expect,

1. God can no doubt entirely change the heart and character of any man at any moment,—as he can call any individual into existence when he

pleases, and endow him with whatever powers of body or of mind seem best suited to his destined place in existence.

2. It may be, also, that a few instances have occurred, in which such an entire change has taken place instantaneously,—either during the progress of life, to serve some grand purpose of Providence,—or at the termination of it. The conversion of Paul, and the promise made to the thief on the cross, may be viewed in this light.

3. But, then, all such instances are to be regarded not as the usual workings of Providence, but as special acts for a particular purpose to be served in life,—or, if occurring at the end of it, as connected with circumstances, and it may be with future relations in the history of the individual, which we are not able to estimate,—and which cannot be considered as authorizing us to expect similar interferences in other particular instances.

The question then is,—supposing the repentance of a death-bed to be sincere and genuine, what is its value,—or what are we entitled to conclude from it, as to the future state of the individual in whose case it has occurred?

Now, this being the general statement of the question, two separate opinions have been entertained respecting it.

In the first place, it has been insinuated that, supposing the repentance to be of the *true* kind, it is attended of course with an entire change in the character and condition of the repentant person,—and must, consequently, place him in the

same state, hereafter, as if he had spent all his life in acts of duty.

On the other hand, it is maintained, that, supposing a man to have spent his former days in sin,—it is no duty, but a mockery of God and a trifling with his own heart, to cherish feelings of repentance, of the sincerity of which he cannot be certain,—or rather which he has much reason to suspect to be false and delusive,—and which, at all events, can be no compensation for the neglect of the great duty which he has left unfulfilled,—the duty of managing to the best advantage all the talents and opportunities that had been granted him in life.

I shall now offer a few hints, on each of these opinions, in their order.

In the first place, then, there seem to be but *two* principles on which we can conceive a man's future condition to be determined;—either,—that condition must be the result of his whole conduct on earth,—or it must be determined by the state of his soul at the moment of its departure from life.

If the former of these is to be taken as the rule, then it is evident that the repentance of a death-bed—forming but a very small portion of a man's whole conduct—cannot be considered as entitling him to entertain, at least, any very extravagant hopes as to the result to which it shall lead,—even though, as a part of his entire conduct, it may not be left altogether unnoticed in the determination of his final condition.

If, on the other hand, the second consideration mentioned—that, I mean, of the state of the son *and*

at the moment of its departure from life—is chiefly or solely to be taken into account, then we have to inquire what is, in all fair estimation, the state of a man, who, after having lived an unconcerned or vicious life, at last becomes sensible of the evil of his ways, and humbles himself, however sincerely, for the deeds which he has done.

Now, the most that can be said of such a man's state of mind seems to be this,—that, having become aware of the evil of his ways, and of the value of a better course of life, he has formed a deliberate and sincere *resolution*—if Providence shall favour him with an opportunity—of living a better life in all coming time. But, surely, this *sorrow* and this *resolution* do not imply, that evil *habits* which have long been contracting, are at once removed from their influence on his mind,—that good feelings, and all Christian graces which, also, are of slow and progressive growth, have likewise gained that ascendancy, which time and practice alone in the ordinary course of things, can give,—or that the work which was given to the individual to do in life,—the trust that was committed to him,—and which he has failed to fulfil,—will henceforth be regarded as if it had been faithfully and punctually done.

The truth is, we reason from an analogy which is not strictly applicable to the subject, when we suppose that a human soul, the *character* of which is constituted by *habits* and *dispositions* that have been gradually acquired, can be changed *at once*, as we alter the constitution and entire complexion of any fixed and unorganized substance by the addition of a new ingredient.

Such an instantaneous and entire change belongs *only* to fixed and unorganized substances,—for in the *ordinary course of things*, all progressive na-

tures, from their very definition, admit but of a change more or less gradual, according to circumstances,—and, as a plant which has been nourished by vicious juice, or a human body which has been attacked by any constitutional disease, only recovers its healthful state by time, and a slow alteration of its morbid properties—so the state of a human soul, which is made up of habits and dispositions gradually acquired, can only, in the *usual* course of nature, be materially or entirely changed, by a corresponding admission of new habits, and a gradual assimilation of a different order of attributes.

It hence follows, as we have already stated, that the utmost that can be said even of the most sincere death-bed repentance is,—that it is a *resolution*, on the part of him who so repents, *if Providence shall give him an opportunity*, to adopt such a course of conduct as may eventually free his mind from all its evil inclinations, and imbue it with a new order of more becoming dispositions,—and so far as human means can do,—may enable him, to counteract any evil consequences which are likely to result from his careless or unfaithful discharge of the trust, which, as a servant of God, had been committed to him in life.

And hence, also, it follows, that there must be a most important difference between the future condition even of the most sincere penitent, who has only attained to his penitence at the close of life, and that of the man who has been all his life long employed in subduing whatever evil propensities had made part of his nature,—and cultivating those graces which adorn the man of God,—and faithfully and successfully discharging the trust committed to him in life, by the Supreme Disposer.

Indeed, beside the error we have now noticed, in attributing to a human soul that susceptibility of instantaneous change, which, from its progressive nature, does not, in the *usual course* of things at least, belong to it,—there are two other errors, of a similar kind, which commonly enter into our speculations on this subject,—and which cannot fail, wherever they enter, to confuse and pervert any opinions we may happen to form. I mean, in the first place, that mankind consist, simply and absolutely, of two classes, the good and the bad,—and in the second place, that a corresponding simplicity of arrangement may be extended to the future condition of all the individuals who have lived in time.

The former of these errors results from the necessarily general, and abstract constitution of language, which precludes us from the use of words adapted to express all the varieties of human character;—that variety being as infinite in its shades and degrees as that which characterizes all the other works of the Supreme Mind.

But mankind, as they are seen actually existing, do not consist *simply* of the good and the bad,—but of the good, in all degrees of goodness, and of the bad, in all degrees and varieties of wickedness,—these two classes, also, like all the other works of God, may be observed to run, by imperceptible shades, into each other,—so that, if we take the best of the bad, and the worst of the good, no human language and no human imagination even is capable of drawing the distinction between them.

There are, accordingly, in the beautiful words of the Son of God, “many mansions” in the future kingdom,—and God, who is intimately acquainted with the most secret attributes of all his creatures,

—insomuch, that not even the most evanescent of our thoughts is unmarked or unregistered by him, will at last apportion the condition of every man according to that which he has done in life,—and even according to the most *imperceptible* attributes, so far, at least, as the eye of man could discern, of that character by which he has been distinguished from every other individual of the countless myriads that have lived in time. “For as one star differeth from another star in glory, so shall it be at the resurrection of the just,”—and as he who has been guilty of great offences “shall be beaten with many stripes,”—he, also, who has abused but few opportunities, or been guilty of few transgressions, “shall be beaten with few stripes.”

The foregoing considerations seem to make it sufficiently evident, that the extravagant hopes which are sometimes founded on a death-bed repentance,—even when that repentance has been of the best kind,—are not authorized by any just conceptions either of the *progressive* nature of the human soul,—of the *trust* committed to every man in this world,—of the *infinite variety* by which the characters of all the individuals of mankind are distinguished from each other,—or of the corresponding infinity of characters and endowments which God seems to be preparing, by means of these differences, for the future *places* of his boundless dominions.

But, on the other hand, these considerations are far from authorizing the belief that a death-bed repentance is of no avail in the sight of God—or that it is presumption and folly in man, after having lived a life of sin, to endeavour to de-

part from life under the influence of a better spirit.

For, whichever of the two principles formerly mentioned we adopt, as that by which the fate of every man is hereafter to be determined,—whether the whole conduct of a man during his abode upon this earth,—or the state of his soul at the moment of its departure from this world,—a death-bed repentance, when genuine, must, on either supposition, make an important difference between the final condition of him who has sincerely sorrowed for his sins, and adopted a resolution of new obedience,—and that of the man who departs from life with a mind hardened against goodness, and presumptuously rushing upon the fate that awaits him.

If the former rule be adopted, namely, that of the man's whole conduct during life, then it is plain, that the repentance of a death-bed is, at least, *one act* of that life,—that it is an act performed under *peculiar and impressive* circumstances, and likely to make a deep impression on the entire character of the man from this very consideration,—and lastly, that being *the last act* of his life, it may be considered as indicating, both that he departs not from this life utterly reprobate to all that is good,—and that he enters not on the future condition of his being altogether abandoned to hope.

If the other consideration be rather chosen, namely, that of the state of the soul at its departure from the body, then there must be a great difference in the state of that soul, after it has seen the evil of sin, and the value of holiness,—and become sensible of the importance of the trust with which it had been honoured, even though it has failed to perform it with success,—and the state

in which it would have departed, if no such convictions had been attained,—but, on the contrary, if a life of vice had been terminated by that most awfully ominous of all states, in which the heart of man refuses to be convinced of the folly of its delusions, and after having done wrong, presumptuously chooses to run all the consequences of its folly, when about to be summoned into the presence of its Judge.

From these considerations, then, it seems to follow, that a death-bed repentance will not be void of *all* good consequences to him who has attained to it, provided it has been sincerely displayed,—though they are far from authorizing the belief that these consequences will be of such magnitude as is sometimes supposed,—that is to say, they justify us in believing that God, who is intimately acquainted with the most secret purposes of all hearts, and with all the changes which the characters of his creatures may undergo, will not fail to admit into his account even the *last change* for good which any of his creatures may have undergone—though those who have been so changed have no reason to believe that they shall be viewed by God as having perfectly executed that *trust* in life, which they know and confess they have failed to fulfil,—and far less, that their future condition shall be the same with that of those who have done *much good* in life, and of whom it has been said, that “hereafter they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.”

All just inferences, from our experience of life, seem to coincide with these conclusions. For, in

the first place, we sometimes see men cured of their love of vice by great afflictions, which have generated serious purposes of new obedience,—and living, after they have seen the evil of their ways, to be examples of eminent goodness, or to confer important benefits on their fellow-creatures,—and we cannot suppose, that, if the affliction which generated such a new state of mind had terminated in death, God would have taken no account of that change, or treated them as if they were altogether unfit for a place in his kingdom.

In the second place, though it be true that God does sometimes visit the past sins of men, unexpectedly to them, with awful and long-continued judgments; yet such judgments seem almost uniformly to fall only on those who have either *presumptuously* offended, or who have abused signal *advantages*,—while, on the other hand, sincere penitence is commonly the forerunner of good to a man,—and generally prepares the way for his final admission to better hopes,—or even for an eventual, though it may be a distant release, from all his distresses.

Lastly, The whole tenor and spirit of the sacred writings confirm these opinions,—for its character, when properly understood, is a manifestation of Divine mercy to man, seems to authorise us to believe, that the lowest state of debasement into which any man can fall, and the least prophetic to him of good, is that of his departing from life with a heart closed against all feelings of contrition or resolutions of amendment,—and, on the other hand, that God, who had been represented to us under the image of a father rejoicing over the return of a prodigal son, will not utterly shut his ear against the humble and sincere cry for pardon and sanctifying grace, even of him who has long

persevered in sin, but who has at last thrown himself, with a broken and truly contrite heart, at the footstool of that heavenly Father, who has graciously declared, that "him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out."

The following seem to be the conclusions which we are warranted in drawing from the preceding observations.

In the first place, that there is great *folly* in the conduct of him, who, while in health and prosperity, perseveres in any course of known sin, from a belief that he may repent at the last,—because such an opportunity of repentance may, from many causes, never be put in his power.

In the second place, that, though he should attain to repentance at the last,—and though his repentance should also be of the very best kind, he is not warranted to expect from it, such a complete release from all the consequences of his past failures in duty, as is very commonly expected.

In the third place, that it is, however, the duty and the interest, even of the greatest sinners, not to neglect any opportunity of repentance, which may be granted to them, even at the last moment of life,—because there must be an essential difference between the condition of the man who enters on his future place in existence after having seen the evil of his ways, and formed the resolution of new obedience,—and that of the man who departs from life, with a heart resolutely shut against all feelings of contrition or purposes of amendment.

And, in the last place, that the only true wisdom of every man, is to employ diligently all his powers

and opportunities in the faithful discharge of all the duties committed to him by his station in life,—because the *whole of life* is given him, with all its duties, as the ground of his future trial before the Searcher of hearts,—and it is to those only who have industriously improved *all the trust* committed to them, that the prospect is afforded, of an eventual place of high distinction among the obedient and approved servants of God.

ABRIDGED STATEMENT
OF THE
PRECEDING TOPICS,
FOR THE
USE OF THE SICK.

2 TIM. ii. 14. "Of these things put them in remembrance."

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE illustration of the preceding topics has occupied a greater space than the Author, in his plan of the work, had destined for them,—perhaps, indeed, a greater space than is altogether consistent with the purpose for which they have been stated. The object was to exhibit such views as might settle the understandings of those who are agitated by the near prospect of dissolution,—and might afford them a clear and satisfactory ground of trust,—in the character of God,—of his dispensations,—and of the particular trial to which they feel themselves about to be summoned. Now the Author is aware, that any views which can answer this purpose, to persons in such a situation, must be concisely stated, and capable of being easily and speedily apprehended. The sick and the dying are seldom in a condition to follow out a long train of thought,—or even to perceive the connexion between a series of varied considerations. It is, therefore, necessary that those who undertake to guide their thoughts, should be able to

present to them a clear and rapid view of such grand truths, as are of most importance to be made familiar to their minds,—and most fruitful of that consolation and instruction which they need. The Author is, therefore, of opinion that it may be important that a short statement should be given of the views which, in the preceding sections, he has illustrated at some length; those who are able to peruse the observations already presented, or to attend to them as they are read by others, may be benefited by the illustrations as they have been already stated,—and some of those who have the prospect of dying, are undoubtedly in such a condition;—but to others a very abridged statement indeed may be more useful, and it is, accordingly, with this view, and from an earnest desire to make his work useful, that the Author now subjoins the following outline of the preceding remarks. They amount to scarcely more than an enumeration of those already stated,—and the Attendant of the sick, or the Minister directing his thoughts, may, if he sees fit, adapt them to the use of the afflicted, by occasional explanation, or by incidental remark.

ABRIDGED STATEMENT

OF THE

PRECEDING VIEWS, ADAPTED TO THE USE OF
THE SICK.

THE minister of Christ, or the sick person himself, may render the following topics familiar to his thoughts.

1. That he is in the hands of a Being who, by the whole of his conduct, has proved himself to have no thoughts towards him, but such as are friendly and for his good.

That this Being, who claims the character of his heavenly Father, has, during all the preceding portions of his life, been conducting, with respect to him, a grand, though in some respects a mysterious plan, the full evolution of which has not been completed by any thing that has happened, or can happen, to him in this world.

That, more especially, the purpose of Providence has, at all times, been to bring good out of evil,—and that, therefore, even the last and severest trial which man has to encounter, must be intended to prepare him, if he passes through it with propriety, for some manifestation of the goodness and wisdom of God, corresponding to the magnitude of the sorrows he has endured.

2. That man is born not only to sorrow but to sin. But that the very purpose of the Gospel is to proclaim, over all the earth, the good news of the tender pity of God,—that Christ Jesus came, as the Herald and Pledge of divine Mercy to mankind,—that all his ordinances are symbols of the willingness of God to accept the penitent,—and that “there is joy in heaven when a sinner repenteth.”

3. That Christ himself is set forth in the Gospel under several characters most beautifully adapted to the wants and fears of mankind. First, as God manifested in the flesh,—and thus uniting our frail nature with the eternal source of all Being.

Secondly, as the Saviour from sin,—to whose sacrifice we may look back with an assurance that it has been well-pleasing in the sight of God. Thirdly, as our Advocate with the Father, “through whom we may come boldly to the throne of grace.” And, Fourthly, as the Judge to whose pity for our weakness we may look with an assurance that Mercy shall at least be mingled with Judgment.

4. That the Personal history of Christ, while he dwelt upon this earth, was an instructive pattern proposed to all those who, like him, are exposed to sufferings, and have the prospect of death.

He was a “Man of sorrows,”—and under this aspect his life was fitted to be a pattern to all who partake of human nature.

He suffered before he met death, being in “an Agony,”—and displayed that *resignation* to God, and *gentleness* to those who attended him, which are the graces most suited to the condition of those who, like him, are suffering that great sorrow which is “even unto death.”

Finally, He prepared himself even for the endurance of death, because he knew that this giving up of his life was part of the course of obedience which God had marked out for him; for all which he has been raised to great exaltation at the right hand of God,—and his history has become the most sublime and instructive of all the pictures that were ever drawn of that *moral trial* through which man has to pass, and of the glory which succeeds to this trial, when it has been well endured,—a picture so grand and so divinely conceived as to have been far beyond

the powers of those humble men who exhibited it to the world,—and, consequently, offering one of the most striking of all evidences, that they drew their design under the guiding hand and counsel of God.

5. Every man in looking back upon life, must perceive that God has often led him, by his *directing* counsel, into paths which he could not have chosen for himself, but which conducted him, by a wise and divinely-concerted plan, to the purposes which Divine Providence had in view for him;—that as frequently God has *thwarted* the schemes of his short-sighted creature, that he might lead him to more abundant blessedness;—and that, at all times, he has invisibly but irresistibly been directing and overruling both his outward conduct and his inward affections and views, —and always with a good and gracious purpose.

Having a clear view of this directing counsel of God, as having extended to all the past portions of our history, we ought to trust ourselves, with implicit reliance, to the same merciful and wise guidance, during that awful and concluding scene, when our own light is darkest, and our own strength is most weak;—and, like the Psalmist, we should be disposed to say, “Goodness and mercy have followed me all my days,—though, therefore, I walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,—for thou art with me,—thy rod and staff they comfort me.”

6. It not unfrequently happens that, before leaving this world, men are exposed to the endurance of

severe bodily pain, or of *long-continued* suffering. But those who are so tried should endeavour to bear in mind, that all suffering is from the hand of God,—that our most secret pains, in the silent watches of the night, are known to him,—that he never continues them longer than he knows them to be instrumental in promoting some good purpose,—and that his time, for their removal, or for our release from them, is the very best for ourselves, if we properly understand our own interest. It is, accordingly, not only through *faith*, but through *patience*, that we must inherit the promises.

7. Men often lament that death seems about to overtake them at an inopportune season.

They complain that they are about to be cut off in the *midst* of their days. But it is evidently the plan of Providence, that men should depart at all stages of their journey.

They would choose to do much good yet in life. But God never can want means of producing the good which he intends,—nor will the earth be forsaken, though we should be cut off.

Some men are anxious respecting the welfare of those whom they leave behind them. But has not God been, in all their days, a *providing* God for themselves,—and has he not promised to protect the children and the desolate widows of those whom he calls to himself?

Lastly, Some men would like to live till they had obtained a better assurance of Divine favour, and a more certain prospect of eternal happiness. But as there was a time for our coming into life, which we did not choose for ourselves, so is there

for our going out of it,—perhaps God intends to convey us to felicity from the very midst not only of our sorrows, but of our doubts and fears,—and, at any rate, there would be manifest impropriety in permitting men to judge for themselves as to the most convenient time for their departure.

8. Men have many unreasonable and unfounded fears respecting death itself.

All men die,—and, therefore, death cannot be in itself an evil,—nor are we going to the dead, but to the grand Company of the living,—to the innumerable Multitude of the vast Host of God.

The convulsion and other symptoms of suffering that attend the act of dying, are but involuntary movements, and derive their effect chiefly from our imagination.

The humiliating Accompaniments of death,—the Grave,—the Coffin,—the Shroud,—and the devouring Worm,—are terrible only, because we fancy that our bodies shall continue, even after the spirit has left them, to be sensible of the humiliating circumstances in which they are placed.

A very common cause of the fear of death is the greatness and unknown nature of the change to which it introduces us. But we have already passed through more than one state,—that of our existence in the womb,—and that of our continuance in this world,—and we have ever found that God has provided for us when we could not take care of ourselves.

We may be certain, therefore, that as we are not going out of the dominions of God,—goodness and mercy shall still be apparent in his dispensations towards us,—or in the provision which

he has made for our entrance into the invisible world.

Lastly, The Sting of death is sin. But man is born to sin,—and we should distinguish between a course of *voluntary* or *presumptuous* guilt,—and the *frailty* that belongs to human nature,—God requires us to exercise *faith* in his mercy,—and Christ is set forth as the Saviour of men from the consequences of their sins.

9. What, then, is the spirit or temper of mind with which death should be met?

It ought not to be met with *levity* or *presumption*, for it is the greatest and most momentous in its consequences, as it is also the last of all the trials that time can present to us.

Neither should it be met with unbecoming *fear*,—for it neither terminates altogether our existence, nor removes us from under the care of the good Providence of God.

It should be met, therefore, with *solemnity*,—for it is an awful and a momentous journey, through which man has to pass to his greater destiny.

It should be met also, however, with *good hope* in God,—for he has promised his aid to those who are called to this trial,—and we have reason to believe, that to those who pass well through it, the glory which awaits them shall be proportioned to the endurance, through which that glory has been attained.

The noblest view under which death can be

contemplated, is that of its being the grandest though most mysterious of all the trials of our *faith in the Divine dispensations*, which time has presented to us. It is God calling us, after having experienced his constant goodness while we lived, to trust in the continuance of that goodness when we are leaving life,—and a good man may, therefore, be considered as giving, by the faith with which he prepares himself for his last and eventful journey, a pledge of the *confidence* with which he reposes in the wise and merciful care of Him who, all his life long, has followed him with loving-kindness and tender mercy.

The most pleasing *Image* under which the grave can be viewed by us, is that of its being a *bed of rest*, after the fatigues and agitations of the day of life.

A *placid* death is one of the most beautiful sights which can be seen in this world,—and a *triumphant* death is one of the noblest pledges of the Divine goodness.

But we ought not to judge solely by the mode of any individual's departure from life, of the nature of those arrangements upon which he is about to enter,—for the very best of men are sometimes tried by sore trouble during their concluding days,—or are agitated by irritating and vexatious diseases,—or pass into the land of spirits from a state of utter derangement of all their powers of body and of mind.

Those, in particular, who are labouring under irritating diseases, ought not to be cast down, or to lose their confidence in God, though they should not be able to avail themselves of the consolations of religion for producing in them that placid state of mind which they would gladly evince,—for God knows their frame, and remembers that they are dust,—and multitudes have gone from the endurance of similar irritations, to the inheritance of a “joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

The very best of men have not even been able to meet the hour of their departure with a consciousness of its coming,—and it is proper therefore, that those who witness the departure of those who are so tried, should bear in mind, that God calls his creatures to himself by an infinitely varied order of trials,—that in all these parts of his dispensations there is a great mystery, which eternity only can unveil,—and that in this, as in other parts of the lot of man, “Many who, on earth, seemed to be first, shall be last,—and the last first.”

A calm death, then, is no doubt desirable,—but no man is entitled to expect that that shall be the character of his own departure from life.

We ought all to be thankful if we are but permitted to say, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Amen.

We are not warranted, by either Scripture or reason, in believing that a death-bed repentance,

even though of the most sincere kind, will, in all respects, compensate for past failures, or be considered as conducting the penitent to the same distinction in the Divine kingdom, as if he had faithfully performed, through life, the duty committed to him.

But neither is there any good ground for thinking, that the repentance even of a death-bed is of no avail in the sight of God. On the contrary, it must, if genuine, make the entrance of the penitent on his eternal career, very different from that of the man who has passed into the eternal world, reprobate and determined against all impressions of goodness,—and, therefore, even the last moments of life ought to be employed, with *earnest solicitude*, in humbling ourselves before God, and in earnest prayer that his Spirit may yet in some measure mould our hearts to obedience to his will.

CONCLUDING REMARK ON THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

It is earnestly recommended to the Sick, to make the preceding observations familiar to their minds. They are short and easily comprehended,—and they seem to embrace almost all the topics that are necessary for establishing the departing Spirit in a satisfactory apprehension of those grand and interesting religious views, which are the source, in so far as the *understanding merely* is concerned, of “peace and joy in believing.” Amen.

PART SECOND.

SECTION I.

**DEVOUT EXERCISES FOR THE SICK, IN THE
LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE;**

WITH

**APPROPRIATE REFLECTIONS PREFIXED TO EACH
PRAYER.**

PSALM cxix. 54. "Thy statutes have been my songs
in the house of my pilgrimage."

PSALM xix. 10. "More to be desired are they than
gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than
honey, and the honey-comb."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

DEVOUT persons,—in all ages,—and especially in seasons of great affliction,—or when they have had the near prospect of dissolution,—have manifested a peculiar predilection for the very words of the sacred writings, as the most appropriate vehicle in which their devotional feelings could be conveyed. And this preference may be accounted for and justified by various very obvious considerations.

In the first place, the oriental idiom, by which the language of holy writ is pervaded, is peculiarly fitted for the expression and nourishment of devotional feelings;—and, far better than the more subdued, though more correct phraseology of European dialects, coincides with that warm, and impassioned, and elevated state of the imagination and affections which belongs to those, who, as pious men, are in the habitual indulgence of all the loftiest,—and purest,—and most expansive feelings of which human nature is susceptible.

In the second place, besides this peculiarity of the idiom of the East,—a peculiarity which is common to all the languages of that quarter of the world,—the sacred books abound with *passages directly* expressive of devotional feelings, of a more perfect and interesting kind than can be found in any other writings. The book of Psalms alone, far surpasses all other compositions, as an invaluable treasury of such passages,—and the divine impress of the Spirit of Inspiration is thus as legibly traced on the general character of these effusions, as if it had been seen resting in the effulgence of uncreated light on the pen of the Psalmist, and

prompting him to the expression of such thoughts as could only come from the Eternal Fountain of all light. But the whole of the sacred volume is beautified by occasional passages of the same kind,—and in the short but sublime prayers which are interspersed through the books of Moses,—in the pathetic wailings of the man who was tried by sore affliction,—in the visionary glimpses of good things to come which opened upon the eye of the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and “Holy men of old, who spake not of themselves, but as the Spirit gave them utterance,”—in the matchless beauty and divine simplicity of the views exhibited of the character of God, and of the attributes of his “kingdom of heaven,” which pervade the discourses of our blessed Redeemer,—in the lofty bursts of resistless enthusiasm which characterize the writings of that great Apostle who “counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord,”—and in the more subdued, but not less beautiful or useful delineations of that “spirit of love and of good works” which pervade the writings of the rest of the sacred Band, who were as the Heralds of God to a sinful world, and “whose feet upon the mountains were indeed beautiful,” as they advanced from land to land, “publishing peace,” and crying to the inhabitants of the Earth, “Behold your God,”—throughout, indeed, the *whole* of the sacred writings, examples are constantly occurring of strains of devout fervour, and of direct appeals to the Throne of Grace, which far surpass all others that have ever been produced among men,—and which are exquisitely suited to all the varieties of condition in which the pious of all ages can be found.

For it is *further* to be considered, upon this particular topic, that these divine effusions are not

generally given in Scripture as merely detached exercises of piety, or as professed models for the imitation of those who may choose, in the stillness of their closets, to devote themselves to the cultivation of their devotional feelings,—they are the strong and natural expression of emotions called forth by the actual pressure of the circumstances in which the Sacred Writers were placed,—they are, *in the Old Testament*, expressions of the dependence of the inspired Authors on the good providence of him who “ruleth all things by the Word of his Power,” and to whom not the most secret pang that wrings the hearts of any of his creatures is unknown;—and under *the new Dispensation* they portray the still loftier and more expansive feelings of minds, cheered amidst sufferings, by the recollection of that “tender Mercy” of God which had descended on the benighted habitations of men, as the “Day-spring from on High,”—approaching the Eternal Father through the mediation of One who had come among us “full of Grace and Truth,” but who is now seated, as the High Priest of Mankind, amidst the ineffable brightness of the temple that is above,—and feeling all the sublime character of their vocation, as followers of him who, “for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God;” that they too, by a faithful performance of their subordinate tasks, and a patient running of “the race set before them,” might finally be admitted, through the endurance of death, to a participation of his triumph, and of his unending felicity.

These were the true and living circumstances under the influence of which the devotional passages of the sacred volume were produced,—and

these are the actual feelings which at once vouch for the perfect sincerity of those "Men of God" by whom the divine record was penned,—and adapt their expressions of piety to be the habitual modes of language employed by those who, in all ages till the end of time, and in all countries over the wide face of the habitable earth, shall consider the indulgence of *such feelings*—of dependence on the good Providence of God,—and of humble but reposing trust in the work and character of the Redeemer,—as not only the paramount duty, but by far the highest privilege, the sublimest honour, and the truest happiness, by which their present state of humiliation and of conflict is distinguished.

But, in the third place, there is a consideration which seems still more powerfully than either the peculiarity of the Eastern idiom, or the rich exuberance of the sacred writings in devotional passages,—to recommend the *very Words* of Scripture to the affections of the devout,—and especially to render such words more dear to them than any others, in those seasons when the deepest feelings of the heart are most strongly called forth—by the endurance of great affliction,—or by the near prospect of dissolution. I refer to the sublime impression which we all have of such words, as the *very language* that has been employed by God himself,—and in which he has embodied for the use of men,—his Threatenings,—his Promises,—his Consolations,—his fatherly Exhortations to duty,—and his glorious Intimations of the Reward which shall be the portion of those who endure "even unto death."

This is the true source of the avidity with which the soul, when *sorely tried*, clings to the *very words* of the Sacred Books,—we then feel

that we are pleading the Promises of God in the exact words which he himself has made use of, and authorized us, by this use, to employ in addressing him,—we feel something, consequently, of the same *Power* in approaching the Throne of Grace,—and of the same impossibility of having our requests eluded which belongs to the man, who, when contending with his Fellow Man for the obtaining of any good, can urge the *very words* which that *Antagonist* had given him,—we urge, in short, the *very words* of God himself,—and as a Fellow Mortal is sometimes forced into concession by a regard to his own consistency, when all other considerations would have proved ineffectual,—our imaginations, which have something earthly and low to them, even during their sublimest exercises, are sustained by the secret confidence which these considerations inspire,—that God cannot be disregardful of the oath which he has sworn,—but that as he has furnished us with words, we are entitled to employ these against him, with an assurance, that for the sake of them, if for no other reason, our request must be conceded.

This secret feeling is at the same time sanctified and sublimed by the essential beauty of the very terms which we employ,—by the holiness that is communicated to them, as being the words which we have always heard used in the most sacred Places, and on the holiest of all Subjects,—by the innumerable Associations of interest and beauty which connect these words of God with all our noblest and most cherished hopes and affections,—and by the peculiar excellence of those devotional passages, in which, throughout the sacred volume, these words are employed.

The whole of these considerations produce a

state of mind, in the employment of Scripture language, which is complex indeed, and capable of being analyzed into a variety of subordinate or component parts,—but yet beautifully suited to the variety of feelings which, in seasons of deep emotion, agitate and characterize the human heart,—and which, in their union and joint co-operation, lose all traces of this complexity, and diffuse their freshening and beautifying influence over the most secret regions of the soul,—as a well of water springing up,” in it, “to everlasting life.”

It is for these reasons, that the Author has been so copious in the following devotional effusions, which are entirely *in the language of Scripture*; ---he trusts the preliminary reflections to each prayer will be found to suggest such considerations as may prepare the mind of the supplicant for the affectionate use of the petitions he is to employ;---and he now earnestly prays, that the divine blessing may accompany this humble attempt to give consolation and strength to the afflicted,---and may render it the occasion of much good to the souls that are “weary and fainting” in their travail.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK,

IN THE

LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

I.

THANKFUL REVIEW OF DIVINE GOODNESS DURING LIFE.

1 JOHN iv. 18. *Perfect love casteth out fear.*

REFLECTION.

GOODNESS and Mercy have followed me all my days,---and God, who at first called me into life, and gave me my place in this beautiful world, and as One of his highly-favoured offspring, has also shown me by innumerable tokens, that, even amidst all sorrows, he is my best refuge,---and that I may safely commit myself, for time and for eternity, to his unfailing love.

PRAYER.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,---and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,---who

forgiveth all my iniquities,---who healeth all my diseases,---who redeemeth my life from destruction,---who crowneth me with loving-kindness and tender mercies.*

Surely, O God, thou art good unto all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.†

Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves,‡---thou breathedst into us the breath of life, and thy visitation has sustained our spirits. Thou art the Former of our bodies, which are fearfully and wonderfully made, and curiously wrought in the inward parts. Thine eye did see my substance, yet being imperfect,---and in thy book all my members were written,---which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them.§

Thou also art the Father of my spirit,---and thine inspiration has taught me more than the beasts of the field,---and made me wiser than the fowls of heaven.||

Every day have I had reason to bless thee, and to magnify thy holy name,¶---for thou hast made the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice over me,**---thou hast led me by green pastures and still waters,---thou hast prepared a table before me, and made my cup to run over.††

All thy works praise thee,---the earth is full of thy goodness. The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun,---thou hast set all the borders of the earth,---thou hast made summer and winter.‡‡

* Psalm ciii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

† Psalm cxlv. 9.

‡ Psalm c. 3.

§ Psalm cxxxix. 16.

|| Job xxxv. 11.

¶ Psalm cxlv. 1.

** Psalm lxxv. 8.

†† Psalm xxiii. 4.

‡‡ Psalm lxxiv. 17.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,—for thou art with me,—thy rod and staff they comfort me. Goodness and mercy have followed me all my days, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

To whom can I come but unto thee,—for thou wilt have a respect unto the works of thine own hands,—though my heart and strength fail, thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.†

Whom, O Lord, have I in heaven but thee,—and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee.‡

Into thy hands, O Father, I commend my spirit.§

II.

WONDERFUL COURSES OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

ROMANS xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

REFLECTION.

MYRIADS have lived and died before I came into existence,—and God, whose Providence embraces

* Psalm xxiii. 7, 8.

† Psalm lxxiii. 26.

‡ Psalm lxxiii. 25.

§ Luke xxiii. 46.

all events and all times,—and has bound them all together into one system of perfect wisdom and beauty, has adapted his dispensations with boundless skill, to the purpose which he intended all creatures to serve in his dominions.

In my appointed time, I also have been called into life,—and God provided for me before I came, the parents that were to rear and support my infancy,—the companions I was to meet with in life,—the education I was to receive,—and all the blessings, and trials, and temptations, that have made up my earthly history.

At all times he has overruled my own devices,—and has led me in a way which I did not altogether choose for myself, to his own gracious purposes for my good.

All things have conspired to lead me to the circumstances in which I am now placed,—and God, who will not leave his own work unaccomplished, is now conducting me—by this sore trial,—and by calling me to resign my place in his visible dominions,—to some greater home, where his plans for my good shall be more completely unfolded.

PRAYER.

Yes, O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or even thou hadst formed the earth and the world,—even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest again, Return, ye children of men,—for a thousand years are in thy sight as

yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.*

Thou hast made all thy goodness to pass before me in the land of the living.† By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels,---my praise shall be continually of thee.‡

The way of man, O Lord, is not in himself, neither is it in man that walketh to direct his steps,---for our times are in thy hand.§ When I have erred, thou hast restored my soul,---and hast led me in the paths of righteousness, for thine own name's sake.||

O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.¶

And now, O Lord, I go the way of all the earth,**---but thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,††---and of thy dominion there shall be no end. Thou wilt yet perfect that which concerneth me. O Lord! forsake not the work of thine own hand.

Let thy work appear unto thy servants,---and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,---and establish thou the work of our hands upon us,---yea the work of our hands establish thou it.‡‡

Guide me with thy counsel while I live, and afterwards receive me to glory.§§

* Psalm xc. 1, 2, 3, 4.

† Psalm lxxiii. 25.

‡ Psalm xxiii. 5.

** 1 Kings ii. 2.

†† Psalm xc. 16, 17.

† Exodus xxxiii. 19.

‡ Psalm xxxi. 15.

¶ Romans xi. 33.

‡‡ Psalm cxlv. 13.

§§ Psalm lxxiii. 25.

III.

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

PSALM xxxii. 10. *He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*

REFLECTION.

How often, in the course of life, have I sinned, and God has made my sins to correct me,—how often, also, have I suffered what seemed to me to be evil from the hand of God,—and he has made it prove to me for good.

Alas! it is only our shortsightedness that makes us suppose that any thing is ultimately evil under the superintendence of a Being of perfect goodness, and wisdom, and power,—we see but a small part of his plans,—and, fixing our view on detached portions, we presume that to be *evil*, which is designed to issue in good,—and that to be *defective*, which is but a part of one infinitely perfect whole.

How often have I thus erred in estimating the conduct of Providence in mine own particular circumstances,—and how often, also, have I had reason, from the course of events, to see, that all things were done wisely, and for the best.

This also, then, should be my consolation and ground of hope, when I am about to yield to my last and greatest of all distresses;—for *that*, also, is but a part of the same grand scheme, and, hard as its endurance may be, it is but working out for me, if I duly improve it, “the peaceable fruits of

righteousness," in some greater and more enduring world.

PRAYER.

Blessed, O Lord, be thy name for the promise given to us,—that all things work together for good to them that love thee,—to those who are the called according to thy purpose.*

And thanks be to thy name, that though no affliction for the present seemeth joyous but grievous, yet to them that are exercised thereby, it worketh out the peaceable fruits of righteousness.†

Blessed above all be thy name, that thou makest even the sins of man to correct him, and his backslidings to reprove him,‡—and that, when thy people depart from thy law, though thou visitest their sins with rods, and their iniquities with stripes, yet thou takest not thy love from them,§—but makest all things work together to them for good.

Clouds and darkness surround thy throne,—thy footsteps are in the sea, and thy path in the great waters,—and thy goings cannot be traced. But blessed be thy name, that justice and judgment are at all times the habitation of thy throne,||—that mercy and truth go continually before thy face.

Help me, O Lord, to put my trust in thee, and not to be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day,—nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness,—nor for the destruction

* Romans viii. 28. † Heb. xii. 11. ‡ Jerem. ii. 19.

§ Psalm lxxxix. 32. || Psalm lxxxix. 14.

that wasteth at noon-day.* Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, let me fear no evil.†

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?‡ The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine,—though the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat,—though the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will glory in the God of my salvation.§

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust,—let me not be confounded. Let the shadows of death depart,—and the day-dawn arise on my soul,||—for then shall I see light clearly. Amen.

IV.

CONFESSION OF SIN.

1 JOHN i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

REFLECTION.

AMIDST the deep affliction into which I have now

* Psalm lxxxi. 5, 6. † Psalm xxiii. 4. ‡ Psalm xxvii. 1.

† Habakkuk iii. 17, 18.

|| 2 Peter i. 19.

fallen,—when the sorrows and fears of death encompass me, and all the vain delusions of life appear to me in their true character, how different is the opinion which I have been led to form of my own conduct, from that which I cherished, when all things went well with me,—and I rioted in the enjoyment of health and prosperity.

I imagined myself to be pure and praiseworthy before God,—and entitled to a high place in his approbation and heavenly kingdom,—while I thought not that I was running on in a course of presumptuous sin,—that I was less attentive than I ought to have been to divine ordinances and duties,—that I nourished pride and angry passions in my heart,—that I was sensual, low-minded, and unclean,—that even my best actions and feelings were tainted with much imperfection and sin,—and that there was nothing in me that should have rendered me confident of an acquittal in the presence of him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence.

Alas ! all these delusions have now vanished,—for God is now trying my heart, and making me to see how poor and worthless have been all my past actions,—and, perhaps, it is one purpose of those great sorrows which precede death, thus to open up to man the deep wickedness of his own heart, that he may not depart from life amidst the same delusions which have led him astray during its progress.

What a different view would I now take of things, if God should see fit again to restore me to health and to an active part in his kingdom upon earth, how should I keep my heart, and order all my ways before him,—and what pride should I have in despising all sin, that I might

make my whole life a sacrifice of obedience, which should be well-pleasing in his sight.

But, alas! the hand of death is upon me, and I shall no more serve God in the land of the living. May I then be enabled, as the only duty which now remains to me, as a sinful and miserable being, humbly and contritely to make confession of my sins before God, who has declared, that him that cometh unto Him he will in no wise cast out,—and, oh! may I neither endeavour to apologise for any faults of which I have been guilty, nor refuse to bow down my spirit in deep abasement for the evils which I cannot hide from my own heart.

May God grant me his spirit, to search and try my heart, while I now endeavour to make confession of all the evils by which my life has been stained.

PRAYER.

O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto thee,*—for mine iniquities have gone over my head, and are become a burden too heavy for me to bear.†

Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee.‡ I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men.§ If I should justify myself, my own mouth would condemn me. If I should say, I am perfect, that also would prove me perverse.||

* Ezra ix. 6.

† Job xl. 4.

‡ Psalm xxxviii. 4.

§ Job vii. 20.

|| Job ix. 20.

Search me, O Lord, and try my heart,—and see if there be any wicked way in me,*—for I cannot answer thee for one of a thousand of my transgressions.†

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,—with thee there is plentiful redemption,‡—therefore will I confess mine iniquity,—I will be sorry for my sin,§—I will lay my hand upon my mouth, and my mouth in the dust, crying out, unclean, unclean,—God be merciful to me a sinner.

In my prosperity, I said, my mountain standeth strong,|| and I shall never be moved,—I have lived in pleasure upon the earth,—I have set my heart on things that are temporal, and not on the things that are eternal;—therefore hast thou left me to my own ways, and my own devices,—my foolish heart has become darkened,¶—and I have committed presumptuous sins.**

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for thy great mercies' sake,—and, in the multitude of thy tender compassions, blot out mine iniquities.

I have known to do good, but have not done it. I have often come before thee as thy people come, and have sat before thee as thy people sit,---while my heart has been far from thee.

I have not meditated in the law of the Lord,†† nor made it my delight.†† It has not been sweet

* Psalm cxxxix. 23.

† Psalm cxxx. 4s

|| Psalm xxx. 7.

** Psalm xix. 13.

‡ Job ix. 3.

§ Psalm xxxviii. 18.

¶ Romans i. 21.

†† Joshua i. 8.

†† Romans vii. 22.

unto my taste.* It has not been to me a discernet of the thoughts and intents of the heart.†

I have cast off fear, and have restrained prayer before God.‡ I have not called on thy name,—nor stirred up myself to take hold on thee. I have not set the Lord continually before me.§ Thou hast not been in all my thoughts.

I have vowed unto the Lord, and have not performed.|| Have mercy on me, O Lord, for thy great mercies' sake, and in the multitude of thy tender compassions, blot out mine iniquities.

In me, O Lord, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.¶ The things of the Spirit of God have been foolishness unto me,—neither have I known them,—because they are spiritually discerned.** I have been wise to do evil,—but to do good, I have had no knowledge.

Even when I would have done good, evil has been present with me,—for I have found a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and which is not subject to the law of Christ.††

The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,—and I have not presented myself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is my reasonable service.‡‡

I have often been angry without a cause,—and anger hath rested in my bosom,—I have spoken unadvisedly with my lips.§§

I have minded the things of the Flesh more than the things of the Spirit. I have made provision

* Psalm cxix. 103.

† Job xv. 4.

‡ Deut. xxiii. 21, 22.

** 1 Cor. ii. 14.

†† Romans xii. 1.

† Hebrews iv. 12.

‡ Psalm lxxiii. 23.

¶ Romans vii. 18.

‡‡ Romans vii. 23.

§§ Psalm cvi. 33.

for the Flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,—even those deadly lusts which war against the soul,*—and have been a Lover of Pleasure more than a Lover of God.†

My conversation has not been without covetousness,‡ nor have I learned, in every state, to be content with such things as I have.

I have been verily guilty concerning my brethren of the flesh,—and have not studied the things that make for peace, nor things whereby we might edify one another.

I have despised the chastening of the Lord,—and have fainted when I was rebuked of him.§

I have not been faithful in that which was little,|| —but have hid my talent in a napkin,¶—and have said in my heart, that for these things thou wouldst not call me into judgment.

My goodness has been as the morning cloud and the early dew, which passeth away,**—and in me there has been an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God,—I have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to myself cisterns,—broken cisterns—which can hold no water.††

Thou hast sent even thy Son to save me,—and I have trodden under foot the Son of God,—and have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.‡‡

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for thy great mer-

* 1 Peter ii. 11.

† Hebrews xiii. 5.

‡ Luke xvi. 10.

** Hosea vi. 4.

† 2 Timothy iii. 4.

‡ Proverbs iii. 11.

¶ Matthew xxv. 15.

†† Jeremiah ii. 13.

‡‡ Hebrews x. 29.

cies' sake,—and in the multitude of thy tender compassions, blot out mine iniquities.

O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for my transgressions.*

Blot out, O Lord, as a cloud, my transgressions,—and as a thick cloud my sins. Enter not into judgment with thy servant,—for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.† Take away all mine iniquities, heal my backslidings,‡ and love me freely.

Though my sins be as scarlet, let them be white as snow,—though they be red like crimson, let them be as wool.§

Look upon me in the face of thine Anointed,||—let me be clothed with the righteousness of Christ,----and freely justified by thy grace, through the redemption that is in him.¶

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Yea, cleanse thou me, and I shall be whiter than the snow.**

Cast me not away from thy sight, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.††

Teach me, O Lord, while I am in the world,----sanctify me daily more and more,----and so purify my conscience from dead works,----and enable me to put off the old man with his deeds, which are corrupt,----that at my departure from this body of

* Jeremiah ix. 1.

† Hosea xiv. 4.

|| Psalm lxxxiv. 9.

** Psalm li. 7.

† Isaiah xlv. 23.

‡ Isaiah i. 18.

¶ Romans iii. 24.

†† Psalm li. 8.

sin I may be presented without spot and blameless before thy presence with exceeding joy. ¶ For Christ sake. Amen.

V.

DIVINE MERCY.

PSALM ciii. 77. *The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.*

REFLECTION.

How awful were the consciousness of sin to the heart of man, if he had not also an assurance that God is merciful to his iniquities, and is willing to cast all his sins into the depths of the sea,---and how sweet with this impression, are these blessed words, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,---for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust,---as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts ;---as far as the East is from the West, so far will he remove our transgressions from us."

How dismal were the aspect of this world, if all its present magnificence were but an earnest of those fearful scenes which are destined to receive the disobedient creatures who have passed their few

* 2 Peter iii. 14.

and transient years upon its surface ! But how lovely, on the other hand, does even the face of inanimate Nature appear, when the mercy of God is represented as falling on it like the silent and refreshing dew,---or as lighting up its numberless scenes into varied and softened beauty, like the "day-spring from on high,"---when it breaks through the shades of night, and spreads its radiance on the mountains.

As the sweet sound of a Father's voice is to the Prodigal Son, who seeks to regain his home, and who learns that all his wanderings are forgiven,---as the blessed intimation of pardon to the Convict, around whom the chains of death and the pains of hell have been cast,---so is the healing voice of *divine forgiveness* to the humbled and repentant hearts of the children of men.

I will join, therefore, with the Psalmist, in singing of the *Mercies* of the Lord,---with my mouth will I make known his faithfulness to all generations. I will unite my voice with that of the heavenly Hosts, who praised God and sung, Glory to God in the highest,---on earth peace, good-will to men.

THANKSGIVING.

I will praise the Lord, for it is pleasant, and it is comely,*---yea, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,---to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High,---to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning,---and thy faithfulness every night.†

* Psalm xxxiii. 1.

† Psalm xcii. 2.

Is not this thy name and thy memorial to all generations,—The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, who forgivest iniquity, transgression, and sin ?*

Thou retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest in mercy.†

As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.‡

And come now, saith the Lord, let us reason together,—though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.§

Blessed be thy name, that as at sundry times and in divers manners thou didst speak of thy mercy in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, thou hast in these last days spoken unto us by thy Son,||—that he took not on him the nature of angels, but was of the seed of Abraham,¶—that when he was brought into the world, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God and sung, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men,**—that he pitched his tent among us, full of grace and truth,††—and that he came to seek and to save them that were lost.‡‡

Hosannah to the Son of David, blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us ; Hosannah in the highest.

Blessed be thy name that he has taught us to believe, that as a father rejoiceth over his return-

* Exodus xxxiv. 6.

† Micah vii. 18.

† Ezekiel xxxiii. 9.

‡ Isaiah i. 21.

|| Hebrews i. 1, 2.

¶ Hebrews ii. 16.

** Luke ii. 13, 14.

†† John i. 14.

‡‡ Matthew xviii. 11.

ing child,—so our heavenly Father maketh joy in his House, because those who were dead are alive again,—and they that were lost are found.*

Hast thou not also appointed, O God, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, unto all nations.†

How beautiful, O our God, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings—that publish peace,—that cry unto the inhabitants of the earth, Behold your God.‡

Yea, blessed be thy name, that there is joy in heaven when a sinner repenteth.§

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour,—for he that is mighty hath done great things for us,—holy and reverend is his name.||

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,—who forgiveth all thine iniquities,—who healeth all thy diseases,—who redeemeth thy life from destruction,—who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and with tender mercy.¶

Yea, let all flesh bless his holy name,—for ever and ever. Amen.

* Luke xv. 32.

† Isaiah lii. 7.

|| Luke i. 42, 43.

‡ Acts ii. 33.

§ Luke xv. 10.

¶ Psalm ciii. 1, 2.

VI.

IMITATION OF CHRIST IN HIS OBEDIENCE, THAT LIKE HIM WE MAY OBTAIN GLORY AND TRIUMPH.

HEBREWS xii. 1, 2. *Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

REFLECTION.

WHAT a miserable inheritance does this our human nature sometimes seem to us to be,—doomed to labour, and privation, and care, during the greater portion of its earthly history,—approaching death amidst still greater and more overwhelming agonies,—and at last reduced to loathsomeness and apparent annihilation.

How unlike is all this to the other and sublimer qualities which we sometimes delight to consider as belonging to our nature,—how unsuitable does a nature so oppressed seem to be to the goodness and perfect wisdom of that Being who has called it into existence, and placed it in this magnificent portion of his dominions,—how little reason, lastly, might we suppose ourselves to have, to anticipate for such a nature any glorious reversion in the future plans of Divine Wisdom !

These are thoughts that, amidst the pressure of affliction, and, especially, amidst those great agonies that precede death, may sometimes intrude upon the minds of the afflicted, and bow them

down to the dust, under a suspicion that they have no part in the love, nor any inheritance in the final blessings of God.

And how consolatory, then, is it, amidst such thoughts, to recollect,—that even the beloved Son of God, when he came among us, was a “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,”—that he too was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and his sweat like great drops of blood falling down to the ground,”—that death at last seemed to extinguish all his hopes, and put an end to all his promises of triumph,—but that all this sorrow and humiliation were but the path appointed him by God, for finally conducting him to all the glories of his Mediatorial Sovereignty ;—that he, accordingly, rose from the dead,—was taken up visibly into heaven,—was invested with all power in heaven and on earth,—has been made the Head over all things to the church,—and is to come again, in power and great glory, to Judge the Quick and the Dead.

And as I, too, am now in a similar course of endurance, how ought I to bless God, for the sublime instruction and consolation which this wonderful history is fitted to convey to me,—and how strong should be my faith in the divine mission of those men of God, who, in furnishing us with such a grand picture of the moral destiny of human nature, spake not of themselves, but as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance, for our edification.

PRAYER.

Blessed, O Lord, be thy name, that when thou didst send the First Begotten of thy love into the

world, thou didst prepare for him a body,*—that he was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,†—that he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,‡—and that he was thus qualified, in all things, to set us an example that we should follow his steps.§ Help me, O Lord, like Christ, to be meek and lowly in heart,||—and like him to say, Behold I come to do thy will, O my God ;—yea, let thy law be within my heart.¶

Behold, O God, I am grievously afflicted,—the pains of death have encompassed me,—the fears of hell have taken hold of me,—I have found trouble and sorrow.** Thou hast put into my hands this cup of tribulation,—and now is my soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.†† The help of man is vain,—and, in my affliction, I am ready to say, all men are false.‡‡

Correct me, O Lord, but not in anger,—chasten me, but not in hot displeasure,—for the spirit would fail before thee, and the soul which thou hast made.§§ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,—nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.|||| For my brethren and my companions' sake, I will entreat thy grace. The spirit in them, O Lord, is willing, though the flesh is weak.¶¶ Grant me the meekness and gentleness of Christ.***

Strengthen me, O Lord, for my last trial,—and

* Hebrews x. 5.

† Isaiah liii. 3.

‡ Matthew xi. 29.

** Psalm cxvi. 3.

†† Psalm cxvi. 11.

‡‡ Matthew xxvi. 39.

† Genesis ii. 23.

‡ John xiii. 15.

¶ Psalm xl. 7, 8.

|| Matthew xxvi. 22.

||| Psalm vi. 1.

¶¶ Matthew xxvi. 41.

*** 2 Corinthians x. 7.

help me to believe, that as Christ was raised from the dead, and set at thy right hand, because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,*—this mortal also shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall be clothed with incorruption.†

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—the sting of death is sin,—and the strength of sin is the law,—but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.‡

Mortality shall be swallowed up of life,—and as we have suffered with Christ, we shall also reign with him in his Father's kingdom.§

Let not then any of these things move me,—being persuaded, that neither suffering nor reproach, nor life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.||

* Philippians ii. 8.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 52.

‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 55.

§ 2 Timothy ii. 12.

|| Romans viii. 37, 38, 39.

VII.

THANKSGIVING FOR—GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH,
—FOR THE SACRIFICE OFFERED BY CHRIST,—HIS
RESURRECTION,—INTERCESSION,—AND COMING TO
JUDGE THE WORLD.

HEBREWS iv. 14. *We have a great High Priest,
that is passed into the heavens—Jesus, the Son
of God.*

REFLECTION.

“WILL God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth,”—and far removed as we seem to be from his presence,—and cut off from any direct view of his essential glory, will he yet condescend, in some gracious and visible manner, to unite himself with those rational beings whom he has formed after his own image,—and whom he has placed in this distant, though glorious department of his empire? Yes, O my soul, “God has been manifested in the flesh,”—the eternal Word took not on him the nature of angels, but was of the seed of Abraham,—and thus are we now united to God, since our human nature has been borne by One, who also partook of the nature of God, and has adopted our frail humanity into union with the divine.

How shall a man come before the Lord, or bow himself before the Most High God. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil. Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions,—the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world!

Shall I sleep for ever in the dust,—and “has God, indeed, made all men in vain?” Will no bright morning dawn on the night of the grave,—and must this body, which has been the companion of my spirit in life, be for ever mingled with the corruption of death?

Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep,—and this mortal shall put on immortality,—and this corruptible shall be clothed with incorruption.

How shall mortal man speak unto God,—how shall a creature of the dust hold converse with his Maker? Is there no Day’s Man betwixt us,—is there no merciful High Priest, who may present our offerings before the throne of God?

Christ is entered into the holy place not made with hands, into heaven itself,—not with the blood of bulls or of goats, but with his own blood,—there to appear in the presence of God for us.

But how shall mortal man stand before God in judgment,—or how shall a creature of the dust, who is also covered with iniquities, venture to look upon the face of him—in whose sight all iniquity is an abomination?

The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son,—and mercy and judgment now kiss each other,—righteousness and truth embrace each other.

PRAYER.

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that though thou hidest thy throne, and no

man can look on its brightness and live, thou hast yet accommodated thyself to our nature, by sending thy Son in the likeness of man,*—made of a woman,†—that we might receive the adoption of sons.‡

Great is the mystery of Godliness,—God was manifested in the flesh,§—and now, O Father, we are one with Christ, as Christ is with thee,—and thou hast not given us the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.||

I thank thee, O Father, that though man has sinned, and has no atonement to make for his sins, yet thou hast commended thy love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,¶—that by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified,**—that he hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness.††

He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God.‡‡

Lord give me so to be crucified with Christ,—that the life which I now live in the flesh, may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.§§ All my righteousness is but filthy rags,|||—Lord look on me in the face of thine Anointed.

I thank thee also, O Father, that as Christ died

* Romans viii. 3.

† Galatians iv. 5.

‡ Romans viii. 15.

** Hebrews ii. 10.

†† Romans i. 5.

† Galatians iv. 4.

‡ 1 Timothy iii. 16.

¶ Romans v. 8.

‡‡ Daniel ix. 24.

§§ Galatians ii. 20.

||| Isaiah lxiv. 6.

for our offences, he is also risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep,*—and that we shall all be made alive,—but every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming.

Lord grant, that being dead with Christ, I may also be made alive with him,—and that by his spirit reigning in my mortal body, I may rise with him to newness of life.†

How gracious, O God, is the assurance, that he who bore the sins of many, in his own body, on the tree,‡ also lives at thy right hand to make intercession for transgressors,§—that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous||—and that for his sake, thou wilt freely give us all things.¶

Merciful Redeemer, intercede for me, that my spirit fail not,—and grant unto me, as the earnest of my acceptance, all peace and joy in believing.**

Lord, thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are but dust,—no man can stand before thee in judgment,—but blessed be thy name, that, in wrath, thou rememberest mercy,††—and that in condescension to our nature, thou hast appointed a day in which thou wilt judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom thou hast ordained, whereof thou hast given assurance unto all men, in that thou hast raised him from the dead.

Lord deliver me from evil,—preserve me to thy heavenly kingdom,—and keep me from falling,

* 1 Cor. xv. 22. 23.

† 1 Peter ii. 24.

|| 1 John ii. 1.

** Romans xv. 13.

† Romans vi. 4.

§ Hebrews vii. 25.

¶ Romans viii. 32.

†† Hebrews iii. 2.

that I may be presented faultless,* at the coming of my judge, with exceeding joy.

Help me to be ready, with my loins girded, and my lamp burning,†—because the Son of Man cometh in an hour when we think not.

Even so come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

VIII.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST,—AND HIS GUIDANCE AND OPERATIONS DURING THE PAST COURSE OF LIFE.

JOHN xiv. 17. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, even the spirit of truth.*

REFLECTION.

It is a humiliating and a sorrowful thing, during seasons of trial, and at the approach of death, to think how much sin has mingled with all our conduct, during the course we have run on earth,—and how often we have wandered from that blessed way which leadeth unto life.

But, on the other hand, it is consolatory and elevating to think, during the same seasons, that God has never, at any time, altogether deserted the work of his own hands,—that he has continually

* Jude 24.

Matthew, xxv. 7.

been striving, more or less powerfully or evidently, with our spirits, and forming us for the place we are destined to hold in his kingdom.

It is pleasing to reflect, that often when we have been at a loss what road to take, and have submitted our wisdom to the wisdom of God, he has made plain our path before us, and led us in a right way, for his own name's sake. It is, also, consolatory to think, that when we have been bent on some path, or on the accomplishment of some design, which would have been hurtful to us, God has interfered to break our purpose, and though it might be by a hard discipline, has directed us to a course of duty more conducive to our ultimate welfare.

It is also delightful to recollect, that when we have cultivated the graces of the divine life, God has never failed to signify his approbation of such conduct, by giving us all peace and joy in duty.

Thus has he at all times, during the course of our lives, been carrying on his work for our final perfection,—and can we think that the discipline which has been thus carried on through life, sometimes contrary to our wishes, but with ceaseless consistency, even when we have not seen or recognised the hand that led us, is to terminate at that period when our darkness is greatest, and when the pressure of events is most sorely trying our strength? Ought we not rather to believe, and be thankful in the belief, that God is still making our greatest trial to work to us for good,—and that he will, in his own good time, perfect that which concerneth us?

PRAYER.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me be stirred up to bless and to magnify his holy name.*

Thou hast made all things work together to me for good,—thou hast often led me in a plain path, when I knew not my own goings.†

Thou hast also chastened me, but not in anger,—thou hast taken from me with a stroke the desire of mine eyes.‡

All my ways have been directed by thee,—and thou hast made goodness and mercy to pass before me all the days of my life.§

Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid,—thou hast loosed my bonds.||

And blessed be thy name, that as earthly parents know how to give good gifts unto their children, so our heavenly Father doth give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,—that spirit which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.¶

Forgive me, O God, if at any time I have grieved thy Holy Spirit,—or have refused to be a fellow-worker with thee, for mine own good.

And now, O Lord, when I am sorely tried, and my spirit is disquieted within me,—let me be enabled still to trust in the Lord, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.**

Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why

* Psalm ciii.

† Psalm xxvii. 11.

‡ Ezekiel xxiv. 16.

§ Psalm xxiii. 7.

|| Psalm cxvi. 16.

¶ Ephesians i. 14.

** Psalm xlii. 5, 6.

art thou disquieted within me?—still trust in God, —for there is a river, the streams whereof do gladden the city of God.*

Lord cover me, when the floods do overflow me. Perfect the work of thine own hands.

Grant me, in this my great trial, a double portion of thy Spirit,† and lead me, though I should not be able to perceive thy guidance, to the land of uprightness.‡

Lord, let not my faith fail.§ I believe,—help thou mine unbelief.|| For Christ's sake. Amen.

* Psalm xliv. 4.

† 2 Kings ii. 9.

‡ Psalm cxliii. 10.

§ Luke xxii. 32.

|| Mark iv. 24.

IX.

FOR THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,—UNION WITH GOD, THROUGH CHRIST,—COMMUNION WITH HIM BY PRAYER AND DEVOUT MEDITATION,—FOR THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,—AND FOR ALL CHRISTIAN MEANS OF GRACE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 3. *Our life is hid with Christ in God.*

JAMES iv. 8. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*

PSALM cxix. 54. *Thy statutes have been my songs, in the house of my pilgrimage.*

REFLECTION.

IF it is pleasing to reflect on all the past guidance of God during our journey through life, and to consider this guidance as a pledge that he will lead us, even through the valley of the shadow of death, into the land of uprightness,—it is also delightful to think on the many great privileges which he still grants to his chosen,—and to see in them, also, the earnestness of their final admission to a still nearer participation of those rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand for evermore.

PRAYER.

Blessed, O Lord, be thy name, that thou hast made an everlasting covenant with us, even the

sure mercies of David,*—and that, though the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, yet this covenant of thy peace shall continue.†

It is thy gracious purpose, O Father, that even we should be made partakers of a divine nature,‡—that we may all be one with thee, even as Christ is one,—and we are now no longer strangers to the covenant of promise, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.§

Blessed be thy name, that thou hast not given to us the spirit of bondage,—but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.||

Thou, Lord, hast often talked with man, even as a man converseth with his fellow,—and the fruit of this communion with thee has been sweet unto my taste.¶

Out of the depths have I called unto thee, and thou hast heard me. Even before I have called, thou hast answered,**—and while I have been yet speaking, thou hast heard, and hast been nigh unto me, for that which I sought unto thee for.

Lord, thou hearest the desire of the humble ; thou wilt prepare their hearts.††

Blessed be thy name, that thou hast also given unto us the word of reconciliation. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,—the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter, also, than honey, and the honey-comb.‡‡

* Psalm lxxxix. 3.

† 2 Peter i. 4.

‡ Romans viii. 15.

** Isaiah lxxv. 54.

† Psalm liv. 10.

‡ Ephesians ii. 19.

¶ Psalm cxix. 103.

†† Psalm x. 17.

‡‡ Psalm xix. 5, 6.

Thou hast also given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.*

My meditations shall be continually in thy law,—on thy statutes will I meditate day and night.†

May thy word be sweet unto my taste,—and in its promises may I rest in hope.

Blessed, also, be the Lord God of Jacob, that the tabernacle of God is with men,‡—that he hath set his sanctuary in the midst of them,—and will dwell with them for ever.

May thy sabbaths be my delight.§

Having been baptised in thy name, make me, like a new-born babe, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby.|| Grant me the disposition of a little child,¶—for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Thou hast prepared a table before me,**—and I have eaten with Christ of that bread and wine, which was given by him for the refreshing of the nations.

Help me, O my God, to pay that which I have vowed,—and may all these blessed ordinances and privileges be, to my soul, earnest of that general meeting of the just made perfect,†† when they shall drink new wine with Christ in his Father's kingdom. Amen.

* 2 Peter i. 4.

† Revelations xxi. 3.

|| 1 Peter ii. 2.

** Psalm xxiii. 5.

† Joshua i. 8.

§ Isaiah lxxxviii. 13.

¶ Matthew xviii. 3.

†† Hebrews xii. 23.

X.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN GRACES,—FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY,—AND FOR A HEART IN ALL THINGS RIGHT BEFORE GOD.

EPHESIANS iii. 16. *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*

REFLECTION.

THE *guidance* of Divine Providence during our past lives,—and all the varied, but constantly applied discipline which that guidance has furnished, is a beautiful evidence that God will still continue to work in us, even amidst those awful distresses which precede death,—and by death itself,—and that this last event is, consequently, but leading us to some grander display of the wonderful works and ways of God.

The *privileges* of the Gospel carry with them evidence of the same great truth,—for as God has united us to himself, by our union with Christ, and given us the privilege of prayer, and of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Christian sacraments,—he has done all this to nourish the seeds of piety in our hearts, and to prepare us, by all these means, for a final inheritance in his kingdom.

The Christian *graces*, in so far as they flourish in any heart, are evidences of the same grand design :—for Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Hope is an anchor to the soul,—an anchor cast in heaven, to enable us to pass uninjured through all the storms of life,—even through that last

tempest which seems destined to wreck every thing that had connected us with this earth ; and Charity is the greatest of all gifts,—the very bond of perfectness,—without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. It is the earnest, on earth, of our final union with all the good, in that world, where all hatred and discord shall be done away.

PRAYER.

Let my heart, O Lord, be purified by faith,—enable me to live as seeing thee who art invisible,—let this be the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,*—and being strong in faith, may I look daily not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal.†

Grant me faith in him whom thou hast sent to be the Saviour of men,—to whom else but unto him, can I go,—for he has the words of eternal life.‡

Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief,

And seeing that we have been begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead,—let that hope be to me an anchor§ to my soul, sure and steadfast,—entering within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered.

Above all, grant me Charity, that most excellent of all gifts,—the very bond of perfectness,||—

* 1 John v. 4.

† 2 Cor. iv. 18.

‡ John vi. 68.

§ Hebrews vi. 19.

|| Collossians iii. 15.

without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.

Dispose me to do good to all men,—and always to remember, that as the first commandment of the law is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength,—the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,—and that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Lord help me also to love my enemies,—to bless them that curse me,—to pray for them that despitefully use me,†—and to do good to them that hate me;—forbearing and forgiving one another in love, even as Christ also has forgiven us.

Make me perfect in every good word and work, always abounding in the work of the Lord,‡—and adorning the doctrine of God my Saviour, by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel.§

Grant me, O Lord, all these good gifts, for Christ's sake. Amen.

* Matthew xxii. 39.

† 1 Corinthians xv. 58.

‡ Matthew v. 44.

§ Titus ii. 10.

XI.

UNDER LONG-CONTINUED AND SEVERE TROUBLE.

JOB vii. 3. *Wearisome nights are appointed to me.*

REFLECTION.

THE agonizing and long-continued pains that sometimes are appointed to man before he leaves this world, are among the most difficult to be accounted for of the Divine dispensations,—at least, human impatience, when thus sorely tried, is apt to suppose, that in all this there can be nothing good but evil. It seems to us a part of the ways of God little suited to the benevolence of his dispensations,—and as it is most trying to the patience of the sufferer, it is often extremely agonizing to those even who witness his trial.

But ought I not to recollect, that there is not a part of my frame, nor any pain that affects it, that is not perfectly known unto God, and treasured up in his book of remembrance,—that he has a good purpose in view by all my pains, though I may not at present be able to perceive it,—that many gracious promises are given to those who pass through their trial with patience,—and that as God appointed me this suffering, he has also a time for its removal, which is the very best of all times for myself, if I rightly understand my own good?

PRAYER.

O Lord, bow down thine ear and hear,—open, Lord, thine eyes, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith thou has afflicted me in thy fierce anger.*

I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. In the morning, I say, Would it were even?—and at even, Would, God, it were morning? I am full of tossings to and fro, till the dawning of the day.†

O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear,—how long shall I cry unto thee out of violence, and thou wilt not save.‡ O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not,—and in the night season, and am not silent.

Thou hast not covered with a cloud, that my prayer should not pass through.§

Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious,—is his mercy clean gone for ever. But this, O Lord, is mine infirmity,—I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.||

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me: for thou dost not afflict willingly; nor grieve the children of men. Wherefore, then should a living man complain?—a man for the punishment of his sins.¶ I will lay mine hand upon my mouth, for this is the Lord's doing. I will bear the indigna-

* Lamentations i. 12.

† Habb. i. 12.

|| Psalm lxxvii. 9.

† Job vii. 3.

‡ Lam. iii. 44.

¶ Lam. iii. 39.

tion of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.*

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, cure me, and I shall be cured,—for with thee is the fountain of life,†—in thy light shall we see light. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, and let thy tender mercies come unto me that I may live. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

It is not for me, O Lord, to know the times which the Father hath put in his own power.‡ Yet I know that all things work together for good to them that love God.§ Therefore, will I rest in the Lord, and patiently wait for him,—for it is his hand that hath wrought this.

Even so, O Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight. Amen.

* Micah vii. 9.

† Acts i. 7.

‡ Psalm xxxvi. 9.

§ Romans viii. 28.

XII.

SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL AS TO THE TIME OF
OUR DEATH.

ROMANS xiv. 7, 8. *No man liveth to himself, and
no man dieth to himself.*

*For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and
whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether
we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

REFLECTION.

It seems to us a hard thing to be cut off from the land of the living in the midst of our days. It seems hard to forego the execution of plans on which our hearts were set, and which we believed likely to be useful to mankind,—it is hard to leave friends or dependants for whose welfare we wished to provide,—it is hard to see no more of the plans of divine wisdom, in the progressive advancement of his kingdom in this world,—and, most of all, it is hard to be called to our account, before we have prepared our minds,—according to our own idea of preparation,—and before we believe ourselves assured of meeting our Judge in peace.

But is it not part of the plan of Providence, that men shall depart from life at all stages of their progress, and from the midst of their most favourite schemes?—and how few are permitted to live to the utmost term of human life?

Cannot God, who calls us from our enjoyments,—from our friends,—or from the view of his progressive plans in time, compensate to us for all

this by giving us higher enjoyments, and purer friends,—and by opening to us a wider and grander view of his dispensations, in a better state of being?

We think it hard to leave this world in the midst of our days, because our existence then seems to us to be an unfinished and broken scheme,—and we fancy that we have not accomplished the purposes which Divine Providence intended us to fulfil. But if God has called us, we may be assured that his plan will still go on with respect to us,—and this very breaking up of all our earthly plans, ought to be viewed by us as a pledge, that our present existence is but part of some more extensive scheme, and that, therefore, we are not about to cease to live, but only about to see our destiny carried on under grander and more auspicious circumstances.

PRAYER.

O God, Father of the spirits of all flesh, thou killest and thou makest alive,*—thou bringest down to the grave, and thou bringest up,—thou takest away, and who can hinder thee,—who will say unto thee what doest thou? Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, we are created,—thou takest away our breath, and we die,—then the dust returneth to the dust as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.†

My soul is bowed down to the dust, it is humbled within me,‡—my purposes are broken off,—

* 1 Samuel ii. 6.

† Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

‡ Lamentations iii. 20.

even the thoughts of my heart. I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. Yet must I be dumb, and open not my mouth, because thou didst it. For thou art righteous, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments,—just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints! Who am I, that I should reply against God.* Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? I am purposed, that my mouth shall not transgress. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right.†

I will leave my widow and fatherless children to thee,—for thou hast said, that thou wilt provide for them.‡

Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee,—Behold I come, for thou art the Lord, my God.

O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days,—spare me,§ that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.—Thy will be done.

I will be patient in tribulation, seeing it is through faith and patience that we must inherit the promises,||—and our present light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us an eternal weight of glory.¶ The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed, when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.**

* Romans ix. 20.

† Jeremiah xlix. 11.

‡ Hebrews vi. 12.

§ Genesis xviii. 25.

¶ Psalm xxxix. 13.

¶ 2 Corinthians iv. 17.

** Romans viii. 18.

Grant, heavenly Father, that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord,—and whether I die, I may die unto the Lord,§—that whether, therefore, I live or die, I may be the Lord's through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,—to whom be glory and dominion from henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

XIII.

AGAINST THE FEAR OF DEATH.

PSALM CXvi. 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul ;
for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

REFLECTION.

DEATH has been styled the King of Terrors,—and most men, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Whence arises this fear, which is natural to all creatures, though modified by their various degrees of intelligence, and diversities of rank, in the scale of being ?—and what purposes does it serve in the economy of nature ?

Some of its causes are no doubt founded on illusion,—such as those which have a reference to the *humiliating circumstances* with which death is attended,—the Grave,—the Coffin,—and the

* Romans xiv. 8.

Shroud. Others of them arise from the *feelings peculiar to the dying*, of the breaking up of their living and organized system ;—and others from an *anticipation* of the fearful or mysterious changes to which that breaking up of our connexion with this earth is intended to lead.

But whatever be the cause, the fact is certain and universal,—that God, who knoweth our frame, has entwined with it, for some wise purposes, this natural fear of dissolution. And something of the design of this arrangement it is possible for us to discover. It *guards* our existence during the space allotted to us upon earth,—it operates as a constant *prospective check* to the indulgence of such sins as may add to the horrors of the last moments,—but, above all, it is an *intimation* on the part of him who is the Father of our spirits, and the Former of our bodies, not only that our mortal part is about to undergo a great change, but that that change is introductory to other alterations in the state or duration of our being, of a still more momentous nature, of which the awful circumstances that attend our departure from life,—and, more especially, those natural fears by which this event is preceded,—are an earnest and omen.

We cannot, then, pretend altogether to conquer the fear of death. Yet blessed be God, that, in the bright prospect opened up by the Gospel, we may find consolation even during our descent into the valley of the shadow of death,—and that many, with their hearts full of the hopes which the Gospel has inspired, have been able to meet their last moments with this sublime song of triumph, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin,—and the strength of sin is the law,—but thanks

be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

PRAYER.

I know, O Lord, that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.* What now is my strength, that I should hope?—and what is mine end, that I should seek to prolong my life?† My strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me:‡ the joints of my bones are loosed, my knees smite one against another,§—and I go to the gates of the grave.||

Yet will I give glory to the Lord, before he cause darkness,—before my feet stumble upon the dark mountains.¶

O Lord, remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions,—but, according to thy mercy, remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord.**

Lord, look on me in the face of thine Anointed,—and for the Redeemer's sake blot out mine iniquities.

May I be enabled to look forward to the grave as a bed of rest,—and be comforted with the assurance, that as Jesus died and rose again, them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him.††

Though I walk through the valley of the sha-

* Job xxx. 23.

† Psalm xxxviii. 10.

|| Isaiah xxxviii. 10.

** Psalm lxii. 1.

† Job vi. 11.

§ Daniel v. 6.

¶ Jeremiah xlii. 16.

†† 1 Thessalonians iv. 14.

dow of death, I will fear no evil,—for thou art with me, thy rod and staff they comfort me.*

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my heart, of whom shall I be afraid?†

Mortality shall be swallowed up of life,—the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.‡

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law,—but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.§

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.|| Amen.

XIV.

FOR STRENGTH TO MEET DEATH IN A PROPER FRAME OF MIND,—NEITHER PRESUMPTUOUSLY NOR IN DESPAIR.

LUKE ii. 29. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.*

REFLECTION.

ALAS! how little do I know with certainty of my own character! How often, during the pro-

* Psalm xxiii. 4.

† 1 Cor. xv. 26.

‡ Psalm xxvii. 1.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56.

|| Psalm xix. 14.

gress of life, have events shown me, that when I thought myself strong I was weak,—that there has been much that was doubtful even in my best actions,—and that I could not say assuredly for what particular place I was fit, or what situation in the succession of events I was destined to hold!

And how little reason then have I to presume that I am capable of saying what is to be my future station in the vast scheme of the divine dominions, or whether, indeed, I shall be found at last to have been worthy of honour or of humiliation!

This thought ought to save me from presumption,—but surely there is great guilt in doubting of the forgiving grace of God. Humility is becoming only when it is accompanied with a proper sense of divine mercy,—and the deepest contrition for offences can have no good effect upon the heart, but in so far as it is consecrated by a corresponding feeling, that these offences may be blotted out.

How blessed a thing, then, is it for man, neither to be presumptuous nor despairing,—but to meet the last and greatest of all trials with that well-ordered spirit, which is to him who is actuated by it, an earnest of the promised inheritance!

PRAYER.

Lord, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

O let thy servant depart in peace, and let mine eyes see thy salvation,†—that when this corrupt-

* Numbers xxiii. 10.

† Luke ii. 29.

ible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, death may be swallowed up in victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

If Satan should desire to have me, that he may sift me as wheat, Lord, pray for me, that my faith fail not.†

Lord, remember me for good, and supply all my need, according to thy riches in glory,‡ by Christ Jesus.

Support me, O Lord, in the hour when my heart and strength fail. When I pass through the waters, be thou with me,—and through the floods, let them not overflow me. When I walk through the fire, let me not be burned, neither let the flame kindle upon me.§

Grant me, O Lord, the consolation which thou givest to thy chosen, and like them may I be enabled to say, Now am I ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand,—I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me at his coming,—and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing.||

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.¶

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

* 1 Cor. xv. 55; 56.

† Philippians iv. 19.

|| 2 Timothy iv. 6.

‡ Luke xxii. 31.

§ Isaiah xliii. 2.

¶ 1 Corinthians xv. 56.

XV.

FOR AN EXEMPLARY DEATH,—OR A GOOD NAME IN DEATH.

PSALM cxii. 6. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.*

REFLECTION.

A good name, said the Wise Man, is better than precious ointment,—and the day of death than the day of our birth.

Why did the Wise Man thus unite a good name with the superiority of the day of death over the day of life?

Was it not to intimate to us, that it is at death that the value of a good name is chiefly found,—or that it is then like a precious ointment, by which our names are embalmed in the recollections of the living?

And! oh! what an awful thing it is for a man to think that he shall leave a bad name after him!—that he shall thus dishonour his Christian profession,—tarnish that blessed name by which he is called,—and do despite to the Spirit of God!

How pleasant, on the other hand, is it for a man to think, that his good name shall live after him!—not to gratify any feelings of vanity which he may now cherish, from a delusive belief that he shall then be in a condition to be pleased with the flattering testimony of men,—but to show to others who still live, that there is something true, and honourable, and of good report, in the profession

which he had adopted, and in the conduct to which it led him.

This is, indeed, the most precious of all embalmings to our memory,—and it is, also, one of the best services we can do to Christianity, thus to teach others, even after we are gone, how pleasant and full of honour are those paths that lead to peace in time, and to happiness in eternity.

We thus serve the cause of Christ even after death,—and continue to influence the progress of his kingdom upon earth, after we ourselves have ceased to have any part in all the things that are done under the sun.

PRAYER.

Enable me, O Lord, in all things to adorn the doctrine of God, my Saviour, by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel.*

While I live, may I live unto the Lord,—and when I die, may I die unto the Lord,—living or dying, may I be the Lord's.†

May the very God of peace sanctify me wholly, and build me up in faith and love, until the day of my complete redemption.‡

And let me not fail, O God, when tried to the uttermost. May others take knowledge with me, that I have been with Jesus. May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his,§ and may others say, Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man's peace.||

* Titus ii. 10.

† Romans xiv. 8.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 23.

§ Numbers xxiii. 10.

|| Psalm xxxvii. 37.

Grant me, O God, that good name which is better than precious ointment,*—may I leave it as an inheritance to my children's children. If, in any thing, I have offended, oh! let not my sins be remembered against me. But wherein I have done well, may my well-doing be to the praise and glory of thy blessed name,—who hast wrought in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.†

Now, may the God of all grace perfect me in every good word and work, and make me a chosen vessel unto him,‡—and may I be instrumental in his hand, by the good name which I leave behind me, in maintaining for him a seed upon the earth, through coming ages.

Grant this, O Lord, and let it in all things be unto me according to thy word. For Christ's sake. Amen.

XVI.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEAR AND DEAR TO US.

JOHN xvii. 11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.*

REFLECTION.

EVEN on the verge of the eternal world, and of

Ecclesiastes, vii. 1.

† Philippians ii. 13.

‡ Acts ix. 15.

its boundless prospects, the heart still reverts, with a natural feeling of anxiety, to the future earthly interests of those with whom we have been connected, by holy and by intimate ties, in this world.

And this feeling has been sanctioned by the highest of all examples,—for did not Christ, when on the cross, exemplify the influence of this sentiment, when, beholding his mother and the disciple whom he loved, he said, Woman, behold thy Son, —Son, behold thy mother?

God also, by his Spirit of inspiration, has condescended to soothe this feeling, by reminding those whom he is calling to himself, that in obeying this call they “may trust their widows to him, for he will preserve them,—and their fatherless children, for he will provide for them.”

PRAYER.

In thee, O Lord, the fatherless findeth mercy.*

Thou hast taught me from my youth up,†—and all thy thoughts towards me have been thoughts of kindness.

Thou wert the God of our fathers, and of the old time before them,—they trusted in thee, and were not confounded,‡—and thou hast at all times a regard to the work of thine own hands.

Now, O Lord, thou callest, and I must answer thee,—thou takest away my breath,§ and who can hinder thee?

* Hosea xiv. 3.

† Psalm xxii. 4.

‡ Psalm lxxi. 17.

§ Psalm civ. 9.

But blessed be thy name, because thou hast graciously said, Leave thy widows to me, I will preserve them,—and thy fatherless children, I will provide for them.*

Make the young to know the God of their fathers, and to serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.†

Incline not their hearts to any evil thing,—remove from them vanity and lies,—give them neither poverty nor riches,—feed them with food convenient for them, lest they be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?—or lest they be poor, and steal, and take the name of the Lord in vain.‡

Preserve them from youthful lusts,§—and grant that from their childhood they may know the Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation.||

Give them the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,¶—deliver them from every evil work,—and preserve them unto thy heavenly kingdom.

And grant, O heavenly Father, that at the coming of thy Son to judge the world, I may be able to say, behold me and the children whom thou gavest me.**

Comfort all who mourn,—give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.††

Guide all who have been near and dear to me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory.‡‡

* Jeremiah xlix. 11.

† Proverbs xxx. 8.

‡ 2 Timothy iii. 15.

** Isaiah viii. 18. †† Isaiah lxi. 3. ‡‡ Psalm lxxiii. 24.

† 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

‡ 2 Timothy ii. 22.

¶ 1 Peter iii. 4.

And now, O Father, I come unto thee,—keep those who are in the world by thy truth,—may the young remember their Creator* and serve the Lord with singleness of heart,—that thou mayest command thy blessing on them, even that blessing which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith.†

And may the aged be comforted with the consolations of thy Spirit, which are neither few nor small,—and at last may they be brought to the grave like a shock of corn in its season.‡

Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.

XVII.

FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE DIVINE KINGDOM UPON
EARTH, AFTER WE ARE DEPARTED.

PSALM cxlv. 4. 11. *One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.*

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom.

REFLECTION.

IT is a beautiful characteristic of that prayer which Christ taught his disciples, that its first and general petitions are all for the advancement of the divine kingdom in the world,—Hallowed be thy

* Ecclesiastes vii. 1.

† Job v. 6.

‡ Proverbs x. 22.

name,—thy kingdom come,—thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

That is to say, May all men perceive and acknowledge their subjection to thee,—may hatred, malice, tyranny, impurity, and every thing that is hostile to the best interests of thy dominions be destroyed,—may love, freedom, knowledge, purity, and heavenly-mindedness—every thing, in short, that is favourable to the best state of this world, and of the human race, be promoted, and obtain a wider influence among men,—and thus may the condition of this earth gradually become more and more like that of those purer and higher regions, where all the principles of goodness are observed with more steadfast obedience, and are displayed on a grander scale.

This progress of the divine kingdom, then, should be the object of our exertions, while we are labouring in health and strength,—this should be our daily prayer while we are in the world,—and this ought to form the wish nearest to our hearts, when we are about to bid farewell to every thing on earth.

PRAYER.

Let thy way, O Lord, be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, yea, let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.*

*Psalm lxxviii. 1, 2, 3.

Give thy Son the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.* Let the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,†

May many run to and fro throughout the earth, and knowledge be increased.‡

Hasten the time when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth,—when nation shall no more lift up sword against nation, nor kingdom against kingdom,—but when sword shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and men shall learn war no more.§

May the wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom like the rose.||

Hear, Lord, the sighing of the prisoner, and free them that are doomed to die.¶ Let the captives be delivered,** and the chain of the oppressor be broken. Let all men love as brethren, and dwell together in unity.††

In every place let incense and a pure offering be presented unto thee,—and from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, let all flesh bless thy holy name.

Over all the earth let there be one fold and one shepherd.‡‡

Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,—thy kingdom come,—thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Amen.

* Psalm xxv. 8.

† Daniel xii. 4.

‡ Isaiah xxv. 1.

** 2 Chron. xxviii. 10.

†† Ecclesiastes xii. 11.

† Revelations xi. 15.

† Joel iii. 10.

¶ Psalm cii. 20.

†† Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

XVIII.

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION,—OF THE GRAND PLANS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE WHICH SHALL BE DISCLOSED TO US HEREAFTER,—OF A MEETING WITH CHRIST IN HIS MEDIATORIAL GLORY,—OF A MEETING WITH THE JUST MADE PERFECT,—OF AN ETERNITY OF PROGRESSIVE HAPPINESS AND IMPROVEMENT.

REVELATIONS V. 11. *And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

REFLECTION.

It is but a small part of a plan of boundless extent and of eternal duration, that we have been permitted to witness during the short years of our pilgrimage on earth,—and we cannot look back upon life without being convinced, that the mysterious courses of Divine Providence are to be continued, with respect to us, on a yet greater scale, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible has been clothed with incorruption.

Yes, thy kingdom, O God, is an everlasting kingdom, and of thy government there shall be no end. May I not then devoutly expect, that whatever has been dark in the Divine dispensations towards me, shall soon be cleared up,—and that, instead of all my repinings and doubts respecting the past ways of God, I shall have reason only to ad-

mire and to adore that boundless wisdom, and goodness, which have been making all things conducive to my perfect happiness in other and greater portions of my immortal history ?

May I not also expect to see him,—“whom having not seen on earth, I have yet loved,—and in whom, though now I see him not, yet believing, I rejoice with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory ?” What a subject of triumph, to be admitted to the presence of him “who loved me, and gave himself for me,”—to meet him, not as “the man of sorrows,” but as my glorified Redeemer,—who is ready at once to grant me forgiveness of my offences,—and to place on my head the crown of victory ! Which, of all the friends of our race, is so worthy an object of desire,—and, oh ! why should I refuse to depart, with so great an introduction in prospect ?

And shall not also the Just made perfect, who have successively left this earth, be united in one grand assembly ? Am I not then going not to the Dead but to the Living,—to the company of Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and Martyrs, and Saints,—to the great and good who have benefited their fellow-creatures in time,—to the yet greater assembly of the humble, and devout, and faithful, who moved in a path unnoticed by men—but who were great in the sight of God, because they diligently improved the trust committed to them,—and whose names were, therefore, written in the book of life ?

Above all, may I not now look forward with great joy to an eternity of progressive happiness and improvement,—to higher displays of the works and ways of God, than eye has ever seen, or ear heard, or the imagination of man is now capable of conceiving.—Yes—there shall be no more death,

neither sighing nor tears,—but a glorious and never-ending course of improvement in knowledge, and goodness, and happiness,—eternal services rendered to the intelligent kingdom of God,—and increasing measures of exaltation and of power, throughout the boundless ages of eternity.

PRAYER.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, all his Saints, in all places of his dominions, bless the Lord, O my soul.*

Now, I see through a glass darkly,†—but hereafter I shall see light clearly,—now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known.

Clouds and darkness, O God, have seemed to me to surround thy throne,—but then shall I know that justice and judgment have been thy habitation,—that mercy and truth go continually before thy face.‡

I know, O Lord, that all thy ways are right,§—for even in time, that which I once knew not, thou hast often taught me by the course of events,||—and this is to me a token, that there are yet greater things than these,¶—and that thy work shall appear to have been perfect, when I shall see the things that are to be hereafter.**

And blessed be thy name, O Lord, that when Jesus, our Forerunner, ascended up on high, all power was given to him in heaven and on earth,††—that he is the head over all things to the church,

* Psalm ciii. 19, 20.

† Psalm lxxxix. 14, 15.

‡ Job xxxiv. 32.

** Revelations iv. 1.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

‡ Hosea xiv. 9.

¶ John i. 50.

†† Matthew xxviii. 18:

which is his body,*—that he is gone to prepare a place for his followers,†—and that where he is, there shall they be also.

Blessed were they who saw the face of the Son of Man, and heard his voice, while he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.‡ Surely he was altogether lovely, and the chief among ten thousand,—for though men saw no form nor comeliness in him why they should desire him,§ yet was he thy beloved Son,—and he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.|| But blessed, far more blessed shall they be who shall see him as he now is, and who shall be made like him,—having purified themselves, even as he is pure.¶

Oh! that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest.** Lord Jesus receive my spirit,††—and grant that I may be acknowledged as thine, when thou comest in thy kingdom.

Our Fathers, where are they?—and the Prophets have not lived for ever. But thou art the God, not of the dead, but of the living,‡‡—and there is a great company, which no man can number, of all ages and countries, who now stand before the Throne, and who sing, Blessing, and honour, and praise, be to him that hath redeemed us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood,—and hath made us kings and priests unto God for ever.§§

They are all thy servants,—and their delight still is to do thy will. Bless the Lord, ye his an-

* Colossians i. 18.

† John i. 14.

‡ 1 Peter ii. 22.

** Psalm lv. 6.

†† Matthew xxii. 32.

† John xiv. 2.

‡ Isaiah liii. 2.

¶ 1 John iii. 3.

‡‡ Acts vii. 59.

§§ Revelations i. 6.

gels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.*

Let my soul, O Lord, be gathered to the company of thy Redeemed.

The hour, O Lord, is approaching, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,—the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Nevertheless, we, according to thy promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.†

There shall be no more need of the sun, neither of the light of the moon,—but the Lamb himself shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains,‡—and behold all things shall have become new.

Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none that I desire beside thee,—thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.§

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,—and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.||

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Amen.¶

* Psalm ciii. 20.

† Revelations xii. 17.

|| Psalm cxlv. 13.

‡ 2 Peter iii. 13.

§ Psalm lxxiii. 25.

¶ Psalm ciii. 21.

SECTION II.

A SERIES OF PRAYERS FOR THE USE OF THE SICK,—ON THE SAME PLAN WITH THE PRECEDING,—BUT NOT CONFINED TO THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

PSALM xix. 14. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

I.

THANKSGIVING FOR ALL THE GOODNESS THAT HAS FOLLOWED US THROUGH LIFE.

PSALM cxlv. 9. *The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

O THOU, who art the hearer of prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

And blessed, O heavenly Father, be thy name, that thy Throne of Grace is ever open to those who call upon thee in sincerity,—for thou not only permittest, but invitest, and hast commanded, all thy children, whether in their seasons of distress or of

prosperity to make known their requests unto thee,—and thou hast declared, that when even the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and returneth unto thee by prayer and supplication, thou wilt in no wise cast him out.

Blessed, for ever blessed be thy name, for this great privilege and high honour which thou hast granted to all thy children. O let my heart be now enlarged before thee,—and while I offer unto thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving for all the goodness that has followed me through life, let my offering be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

Now, then, O Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, now am I prostrate at the footstool of thy throne,—and with a truly thankful heart, I offer unto thee my acknowledgments, for all the manifold and never-ceasing loving-kindness which thou hast made to pass before me in the land of the living.

Thou gavest me my place among thine intelligent creatures,—thou openedst mine eyes to behold this glorious portion of thine unbounded dominions,—thy good providence had prepared for me, before I came into existence, all the advantages which that existence has conferred on me, and by thee have I been holden up from the womb.

Thou hast given me many friends in life, with whom I have taken sweet counsel together,—I have enjoyed the high privilege of a Christian education,—I have, from my youth, been made acquainted with the Scriptures,—and have known the great things which thou hast done for mankind, through Jesus Christ our Lord,—and I have been permitted to rank myself among his disciples,—and to entertain the blessed and glorious hope of yet seeing him, in some greater world, as he now is.

Wonderful indeed, O Lord, has been thy providential goodness towards me. At all times thou hast led me, as by the hand, through paths which mine own wisdom could not have chosen for myself,—thou hast often prevented me from falling into evils which mine own folly would have disposed me to incur,—and I can now perceive, that even where I imagined that I was the sole disposer of mine own fate, all things have been working together under thy superintending wisdom, for the eventual disclosure of that purpose, which, as a subject of thy government, I was meant to serve.

Even the afflictions and the disasters of life have all been overruled to me for good,—and while I thought not so, neither did my heart intend it, thou hast made even “my backslidings to reprove me,”—and hast often made me come out of great tribulation, like gold that was refined.

Yes, O my Father, it is the purpose of all thy dispensations to bring “good out of evil,”—and O help me now to believe, that even this last and greatest of all my earthly endurances, is meant to be subservient to the same gracious purpose, if I am not wanting to myself. Enable me, therefore, to bear my trial, with a becoming trust in that goodness and tender mercy which has so abundantly been manifested towards me during all the previous portions of my existence,—and, oh! let me never suppose that thou, who hast been my helper and my friend through life, wilt now desert me, when my strength is weakest, and when my need of thine assistance is most urgent. Rather, O my God, support me in the belief that all these things are working together to me for good,—and that as the mystery of thy providential guidance has not been completed towards me in this world, it is

only because it is thy purpose, by means of that darkness and sore endurance which has now fallen on me, eventually to lead me into that "land of uprightness" where all shadows shall have passed away.

Accept, O Lord, this, the offering of my thankfulness and trust, for Christ's sake.

II.

CONFESSION OF SIN.

PROVERBS xxviii. 13. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

BEHOLD me, O Lord, in this season of my great affliction,—and enable me, with a truly contrite heart, to make confession of my sins.

Search me, O Lord, and try my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me,—and lead me in the way everlasting.

Alas! O my God, I blush and am unable to lift up my face before thee,—for I have done iniquity from my youth up,—and this hath, at all times, been my way, that I have not obeyed thy voice.

My childhood and youth were vanity,—I have run with the foolish into all the ways of folly,—I have committed many "presumptuous sins,"—and my foolish heart hath become darkened, by departing from the living God.

O God, forgive the impure thoughts, the unamiable feelings, the violent and hasty deeds, the utter recklessness of thy displeasure, of which I

have so often been guilty,—blot out as a cloud mine iniquities, and as a thick cloud my sins,—and let not my transgressions rise up in judgment against me.

I have had great blessings conferred on me, and have enjoyed many advantages for running, with distinguished success, in the way of thy commandments. Alas! what might not my life have been, if I had properly felt and understood my true interest,—and how peaceful, compared with what it now is, might have been the season of my departure, had I exercised but a moderate regard to the intimations of duty with which thou hast favoured me.

Yes, O my God, my sins have been highly aggravated, for they have been done against much light,—in contempt of many great blessings,—and in defiance of manifold warnings which thou hast from time to time given me,—not only by the declarations of thy blessed word, but by the events of thy Providence, and by those secret whispers with which thou often condescendest to intimate to man the dangers of his conduct.

Alas! O Lord, it is in vain for me to attempt to number up mine iniquities,—for I could not answer thee for one of a thousand,—“the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,”—and if thou shouldst open up to me the whole depth and extent of my failures, my soul would fail before thee, and my spirit be overwhelmed at the view of my sins.

O my God, correct me, but not in anger, chasten me, but not in hot displeasure;—show me my sins,—but, oh! show me also the greatness of thy tender mercy,—and, while I am truly humbled for mine iniquities, enable me to take comfort from the thought, that thou knowest our frame, and rememberest that we are but dust,—and that thou

“dwellest with the man who is humble and of a contrite heart.”

Forbid, O Lord, that any hypocrisy or self-deceit should have mingled with this act of making confession of mine iniquities,—let me not presume to think that thou canst be deluded respecting the real state of my conduct or views,—O grant me that true contrition to which the promise of forgiveness has been made in thy word,—and as an earnest of thy pardoning mercy, let my soul now rest in hope,—and let my humbled but penitent heart feel something of “the blessedness of the man to whom thou wilt not impute sin.”

“Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son,—make me as one of thy hired servants.”

Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. Have pity on me, O my God, for thy great name’s sake,—and in the multitude of thy tender compassions, blot out mine iniquities.

Into thy hands, O merciful Father of men, I commit my spirit. Have compassion on me, for thy blessed Son’s sake. Amen.

III.

EXULTATION IN THE THOUGHT OF DIVINE MERCY.

EZEKIEL xviii. 23. *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways and live?*

YES, O my God, I will sing of mercy and of judgment,—I will make mention of thy great compassions, which are “as the everlasting mountains.”

Thy mercy droppeth like the dew,—and distilleth like the rain upon the face of this earth. Thou hast made known thyself to man, as the “Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to thee and live.”

All the hearts of the children of men are weighed down by the feeling of guilt, and this feeling has darkened to them the very face of this world, and made them afraid to look up to thee as their Father in heaven.

But still, O God, thou art our Father,—and this is thy name and thy memorial to all generations. I will, therefore, come unto thee under this endearing character,—and I will plead before thee thy gracious declaration, that “as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,—for he knoweth our frames, he remembereth that we are but dust. As far, therefore, as the east is from the west, so far wilt thou remove our transgressions from us.”

And blessed be thy name, that to give us a

visible token of this mercy, thou hast sent thy beloved Son to dwell among us,—to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,—and to publish to mankind the gracious intimation that whosoever cometh unto thee through him, thou wilt in no wise cast out.

For a further assurance thou hast also given unto us the ministry of reconciliation,—and hast sent thy messengers into all lands to make known “the joyful sound.” How beautiful, O our God,—how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet to them that bring glad tidings,—that publish peace,—that cry unto the inhabitants of the earth, Behold your God!

Though, therefore, I have grievously sinned, yet will I rejoice in the thought, that thou hast no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live.

Yet, O Lord, let me not be presumptuous in my trust,—but may I always bear in mind, that there is an *awful* as well as a *pleasing aspect* of thy dispensations,—and that, as thou delightest to dwell with “the man who is humble and of a contrite heart,”—thou, also, takest vengeance on the proud, and hidest thy face from the man who presumptuously offends.

Lord, look on me in the face of thine Anointed, —and give me that truly humble and contrite heart, in which thou hast promised to dwell.

O save me from despair,—and, even while I review my failures with a broken spirit, help me to join the anthem of the Angels who announced thy great love to man, and to sing, Glory to God in the highest, On earth peace, good-will to men.

Surely, O God, thou art my Father,—and to thy paternal bosom I commit all my concerns for time, and for eternity.

Fulfil, O Lord, the desire of my heart, for thy beloved Son's sake. Amen.

IV.

FOR PROPER VIEWS OF CHRIST AS A SAVIOUR AND AS AN
INTERCESSOR WITH GOD FOR MAN.

HEBREWS ii. 17. *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the People.*

O LORD, I have sinned, and in all things come short of the duty which thou hast required,—what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of Men! Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord,—or what offering will he be pleased to accept as an atonement for the offences which I have committed against him!

Alas! O Lord, all my righteousness is but filthy rags,—and even in my best actions I have done no more than it was my duty to do.

But blessed be thy name, that though all human offerings are unavailing,—and though the purest sacrifice which man can present unto thee is tainted with sin,—yet thou hast not left thy frail creatures without a sacrifice with which thou wilt be well pleased. For thou hast sent thy Son in the likeness of man,—that he might be the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

Lord, it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And oh! thou Supreme fountain of all purity and holiness, how far removed am I and all the children of the dust from the glory of thy presence!—and how can sinful and mortal man presume to hope that his feeble prayers shall find acceptance before the throne of grace!

How blessed then, O my God, is the intimation, that “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,”—“that we have a high Priest taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God,”—“one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them who are out of the way,—and who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

O heavenly Father, grant me true faith in him whom thou hast thus set forth as the Saviour, and the Intercessor with God for men. If, in any respect, my faith be erroneous or my grounds of trust insecure, Lord, teach me what I know not,—correct in my understanding and in my heart whatever is amiss,—supply all my wants,—and let the entire state of my mind and heart be such as thou requirest.

And, oh! grant me, if it be thy will, all peace and joy in believing,—that assurance of faith which results from a full belief that Christ is not only able but willing to save to the uttermost all them that come unto him,—and that I may therefore trust all my concerns for time and for eternity to his affectionate and merciful disposal.

May my faith be of that kind which purifies the heart,—which worketh by love,—and which is fruitful of good works.

Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

Merciful Friend,—Saviour,—and Intercessor of mankind,—save me from my sins,—and let my prayers ascend in sweet memorial before God,—

being perfumed with the incense of thy merits,—
and made acceptable, for thy sake, in his sight.

Lord Jesus, remember me when thou comest in
thy kingdom. Amen.,

V.

FOR STRENGTH TO IMITATE CHRIST IN THE ENDURANCE
OF HIS SORROWS.

HEBREWS xii. 1. *Let us run with patience the race,
that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author
and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that
was set before him, endured the cross, despising
the shame, and is set down at the right hand of
the throne of God.*

Now, O Lord, I am called to my last and great-
est trial,—the fears of death have encompassed me,
—and thou, who hast proved me by manifold sor-
rows during life, art now leading me to that great
endurance which must prepare my spirit for its
final change.

Help me to remember that Christ Jesus our
Lord, was also a “man of sorrows and acquainted
with grief,”—“that he suffered, being in very ago-
ny,”—and that, by his mode of enduring his sor-
rows, he has left us an example that we should
follow his steps.

Enable me, therefore, like him to bow with sub-
mission to whatever thou mayest see fit to appoint
for me,—and when my soul is “exceeding sorrow-
ful even unto death,” Lord, help me, like my divine
Master to say, “not my will, but thine be done.”

Like him, also, may I be gentle and forbearing to those who are about me,—and when all their cares and attention are unable to alleviate the pangs which I am called to sustain, oh ! let me not fret nor be impatient, but rather let me be disposed, like my divine Master, to say, “ The spirit indeed is willing, though the flesh is weak.”

Like the Captain of salvation, may I also be enabled firmly to advance even to my last trial,—seeing it is through that only that the soul of man can enter into rest ;—and having fulfilled all duty, may I be enabled to regard even the offering up of my life, as but the perfecting of that sacrifice of obedience which thou requirest of all who shall be partakers of thy kingdom.

And thus following the example of my Redeemer in suffering and in death, may I be enabled like him to vanquish even the last enemy,—and finally to sit down with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is now sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hear this, O Lord, my humble prayer, and grant me the strength which I have not of myself,—for my Redeemer’s sake. Amen.

VI.

FOR THE INFLUENCES OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS i. 13, 14. *That Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.*

ALAS ! O God, I am not able of myself to think a good thought, or to speak a good word,—and all my attempts at offering unto thee the sacrifice of a renewed heart would be unavailing, unless thou shouldst see fit to aid me by thy purifying and strengthening spirit.

But it is my consolation to think, that thou dost give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it,—and that Jesus Christ our Lord promised this Comforter to be with his followers in all ages to the end of the world.

Thou workest in ways which man cannot foresee,—and the assistances of thy Holy Spirit are identified with those providential occurrences which make up the earthly history of those whom thou hast chosen.

Thou hast often *directed* me in times past, when I could not discern mine own path,—and thou hast frequently *turned me aside* from ways which I would have chosen for myself,—but which, if pursued, would eventually have led me to destruction.

By many *secret hints* thou hast taught me in silence,—when I walked by the way, and when I sat in the house,—when I lay down,—and when I rose up ;—and by all this guidance and instruction thou hast shown, that thou hast a gracious purpose in view for me, and wert not willing that I should be altogether abandoned to myself.

And wilt thou not, then, also teach, and strengthen, and uphold me, in this my greatest need, when my own light is darkest, and my own strength is failing? Yes, O Lord, thou wilt complete the work of thine own hands,—thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me.

O, then, send forth thy light and thy truth,—let them lead me, and guide and conduct me into the land of uprightness.

Destroy in me every root of evil,—adorn me with all the ornaments of a perfect man in Christ,—and thus purify and prepare my spirit for its great change, and for entering on those enduring scenes where the pure in heart shall see God.

Lord, thou hearest the desire of the humble, thou wilt grant their request. Be merciful unto me, and bless me for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

VII.

FOR FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, AND GENERALLY FOR A
HEART SINCERELY DISPOSED TO ALL THAT IS GOOD.

GALATIANS V. 22. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*

HEAVENLY FATHER,

LET thy good spirit adorn me with all the graces that perfect the man of God. Grant me that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for,—that high and holy spirit which is influenced by views higher than any

which time and its concerns can present,—which reposes with implicit trust, in the wisdom and benevolence of all thy dispensations,—and which is especially actuated by the belief, that even suffering and death itself shall never separate those who do well, from the love of God.

Grant me, also, a disposition to look humbly beyond all temporal things to the glory which is yet to be revealed,—enable me to rejoice in hope,—being fully persuaded that though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;—and that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor is the heart of man able to conceive the things which God hath laid up for them that love him.

Grant me fervent charity to the whole offspring of God. O take away from me all narrow and all selfish views and feelings. May I love all men as brethren,—and be kind and forbearing even to those who have done me wrong. “Charity never faileth,”—therefore, O God, grant me this most excellent gift, the very bond of perfectness, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God,—and let it be to me in time an earnest of my final obtaining of that inheritance which thou hast reserved for all them that love thee,

Take away from my heart every thing that is low, insincere, or double-minded. Alas! O Lord, the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,—and no man can tell how much that is wrong enters into even the best offerings which his soul can present unto thee. O grant me a “true and honest heart,”—“search me and try my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” Amen.

VIII.

FOR PATIENCE IN SORE TROUBLE.

JOB xxiii. 3, 4. *O that I knew where I might find thee! that I might come even to thy seat! I would order my cause before thee, and fill my mouth with arguments.*

FATHER of my spirit, and Former of my body, by whom I have been fearfully and wonderfully made, thou hast seen fit to try me, even as silver is tried,—my soul cleaveth to the dust, my bones are racked with pain, and the multitude of my bones with sore pain,—I have found sorrow and trouble.

In the morning I say, When will it be evening? and in the evening, Would God, it were morning! and I am full of tossings to and fro, till the dawning of the day.

But who, O Lord, am I that I should reply against thee? “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” No affliction befalleth man that is not ordained by thee,—“all my tears are in thy bottle, are they not written in thy book?”—my most secret pain, even in the silence of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, is observed and registered by thee,—and thou hast thine own time for the removal of

trouble, which time is, in every case, the best for the final welfare of thy creatures.

Yet thou knowest, O God, how hard it is for man to bear patiently those sore agonies which bow him down to the dust,—and blessed be thy name, that thou dost also pour balm into the wounds by which thy creatures are afflicted,—that thou givest unto us many compensating blessings, and that thy throne of grace is ever open, at the footstool of which we may pour out our requests, and be assured that thou hearest us.

O let me not *presumptuously* demand relief,—but rather let me patiently and quietly wait for it,—for thou actest by means and in ways which the understanding of man cannot foresee,—and, in thy good time, thou makest all things work together for good to them who love thee.

Strengthen me, O Lord, for this great endurance. ---let me not be tried beyond my strength,---grant me all peace and hope in believing,---and, oh ! let no repining or rebellious thought mingle with the trial, by which thou intendest that my soul should be purified.

Surely, O Lord, thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are but dust,---and as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him ;---for without thy secret and sustaining aid, “ the spirit would fail before thee, and the souls which thou hast made.”

Help me, then, O Lord, to be patient in tribulation,---and though my trial should be sore and of long continuance, O let patience have her perfect work ;---since it is through much tribulation, that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven,---and our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are intended to work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Be merciful unto me, then, O my God, for my soul trusteth in thee,---yea, "in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge, until these calamities be overpast." Amen.

IX.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEAR AND DEAR TO US.

JEREMIAH xlix. 11. *Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in me.*

FATHER of the fatherless,—Judge of the widow,—Comforter and Friend of those who have none to help them,—O hear me, while in the view of leaving this world, I now bequeath the interests of those who have been my chief care in life, to thy merciful and fatherly protection.

And, O Lord, how consolatory is it to think that we have such a Protector, to whom, interests so dear to us may be intrusted,—for thou hast been a *providing* and a *directing* God to myself, and it would be the height of ingratitude in me not to rely, with implicit confidence, on the same promised goodness towards those who have been most near and dear to me in time.

Thou hast also given us a sure word of promise, to which we may trust,—for thou hast said, "Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will provide for them,—and thy widows, I will protect them."

Comfort then, O God, the hearts of those in whom I am chiefly interested, when I am no more,

—let them not sorrow for my departure with any excessive or unchristian grief,—but enable them to bow with becoming resignation to thine appointments,—and thus may my death become to them a blessing.

Prosper them in all that may yet await them in this world,—give them such measures of health and of comfort as thou mayest see fit for them,—and, oh ! let them not meet with any of those great disasters which too much bow down the spirit that endures them.

Especially, O God, prosper their spiritual and eternal interests.* Grant them all good and amiable dispositions,—let them be ornaments of the Christian profession, and living examples of the efficacy of divine truth,—and, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, may they enjoy that peace in time which “this world can neither give nor take away.

And as trouble is part of the lot that is given unto all men under the sun, O sanctify to them whatever distresses thou mayest appoint for them,—let them not be the instruments in any case, of procuring disasters for themselves,—and when they are tried, may they come like gold from the furnace, and thus may all things work together to them for good.

May the young be early inclined to do thy will,—may those who are struggling with the labours of life consider themselves as serving thee,—and may the aged be comforted with the consolations of thy spirit, and be prepared for “the inheritance of the just made perfect.”

And thus, O Father, may we each, in our appointed time, be enabled to “die the death of the righteous,”—and being gathered to our fathers in peace, and leaving behind us a good name on

earth, may we all meet at last in thy presence, where there is fulness of joy,—and be for ever united—“a Family in heaven.”

In this blessed hope I now resign all their interests and mine own to thy fatherly disposal, for time and for eternity,—and to thy name be praise, world without end. Amen.

X.

FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE DIVINE KINGDOM UPON
EARTH.

MATTHEW vi. 10. *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

BLESSED, O Lord, be thy name, that thou hast permitted me to see this beautiful portion of thy dominions,—and to witness some displays of that wisdom, and goodness, and power, by which thou conductest thy grand and wonderful dispensations.

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth to all generations. Though, therefore, men successively disappear, yet thy work is continued, and thou wilt finally evolve thy gracious plans for the ultimate manifestation of thy boundless goodness.

And, O my God, what wonderful things are yet to happen upon earth, during the many generations that are hereafter to come forth! Hasten, O heavenly Father, the time, when violence and wrath shall cease among men,—when war shall be no more—when the slave shall be freed from his fet-

ters, and when all men shall acknowledge equal and mutual rights in all who bear the same divine image.

Let pure and undefiled religion every where prevail,—enlighten mankind more and more in those great truths which pertain to life and to salvation,—put an end to superstition and error over the whole face of the habitable earth,—and let “incense and a pure offering be presented unto thee from the rising to the setting sun.”

May liberal knowledge, sound policy, equal laws, and an improved practice of all the arts that beautify and bless life, more and more prevail,—and thus may men more universally be made partakers of those blessings which thou hast qualified them, by their nature, to attain and to enjoy.

Above all, O God, destroy all gross vice and immorality,—may, pure manners, and innocent pleasures, and submissive reverence for all thine appointments become the general characteristics of mankind;—and may all nations be animated by the glorious emulation of being children of God, and “fellow workers” with thee for the perfection of thy dominions.

May the wilderness and the solitary place be glad,—and the desert rejoice and blossom like the rose.

Thus, O God, may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. For Christ's sake. Amen.

XI.

FOR SUPPORT DURING THE LAST STRUGGLES.

PSALM lxxiii. 26. *My flesh and my heart faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

I KNOW, O God, that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. I shall soon go the way whence I shall not return.

Lord, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

Let me not be tried above what I am able to bear. Be thou with me when the floods encompass me,—and when the waters cover me, let them not overwhelm me. Stretch forth, O God, thy hand, and save me in mine extremity,—and shorten, if it be thy will, the severity of the trial through which I must enter into rest.

Grant me the peace of the man to whom thou wilt not impute sin,—and considering this last trial as the appointment of thy wisdom for the purification of my spirit,—and as part of the lot that has been given unto all the children of men,—may I be enabled, in humble confidence in thy mercy, and with firm faith in the merits of my Redeemer, to say,—Now my race is completed, and my warfare is accomplished.—I have fought the good fight,—I have finished my course,—I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life.

O God, thou knowest how feeble is the strength of man. Grant me an earnest of thy support in the calmness with which I am enabled to meet my last enemy.

When my heart and my strength fail, be thou the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. Be merciful unto me, and strengthen me, for my Redeemer's sake. Amen.

XII.

FOR A GOOD NAME AFTER DEATH, AND AN EXEMPLARY
TERMINATION OF LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 1. *A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.*

Now, O Lord, I am called to a fearful struggle, not only in the sight of angels but of men,—and my friends and neighbours will take notice of me how I acquit myself in this last trial.

Take away from me all unbecoming regard to the opinions of mankind,—but yet, O God, enable me so to meet my end, that others may take knowledge of me that I have been a disciple of Jesus.

Let no evil report now arise against me,—nor any thing appear in my conduct that may lessen the respectability of my character, and shake the faith of others in the efficacy of Christian principles and hopes. Forbid, O God, that I should be an offence unto any, or that in any part of my conduct I should give cause to the enemies of the faith to blaspheme.

Rather, O God, may I leave a name behind me which will be a precious memorial to those with

whom I have been connected in life,—and may they have cause to look back to the termination of my course with the placid belief that I have lived and died in the faith.

May I give evidence to the world that my profession has been maintained steadfast unto the end,—and that I have indeed felt the true influence of Christian principles, by not only continuing under their guidance during life, but by meeting death by their assistance.

Thus, O Lord, may I be useful, even after I have left this world, in promoting the interests of thy kingdom among men,—and may others, comforted by the recollection of my end, be induced to persevere in those ways which make the termination of life a source of hope.

Pardon me, O Lord, if in this or in any other part of my petitions I have been influenced by a presumptuous belief of my own worthiness,—and look on me only in the face of thine Anointed. Amen.

XIII.

FOR TRUST IN GOD, WHATEVER MAY BE THE NATURE
OF THE LAST TRIALS.

JOB xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust
in him.*

I HAVE presumed, O Lord, to ask of thee, that thou wouldst enable me to meet my end in peace,—and that no trial too hard for flesh and blood may be imposed on me.

Yet, O my God, let me not forget that thy ways in trying thy children are beyond the scrutiny of our understandings,—and that thou hast reserved unto thine own disposal the means by which thou hast determined to call thy chosen unto thyself.

Thou dost sometimes, therefore, try sorely the hearts and strength of thy best beloved, before thou grantest them relief,—and they are made to wonder unto all who witness their endurance.

Let me not then despair, though I too should be called to a similar trial,—but rather let my trust in thy dispensations be unbroken, from an assured belief, that “whom thou lovest thou chastisest, and correctest every son whom thou desirest.”

Yes, O Lord, even the excellent ones of the earth have sometimes had a harder fate in death than those who have not kept thy law,—those even who have borne witness unto the truth above all other men, have been persecuted, insulted, tormented,—and they who now shine brightest in thy kingdom “have come out of great tribulation,”

Though, therefore, my trial should be hard, and long, and apparently degrading,—yea, though I should seem to be deserted of God in my utmost need, O let not my faith in the goodness of thy nature, and in the righteousness of thy dispensations, be broken down,—but rather may I be enabled to say, “None of all these things move me,—for I know and am persuaded, that neither sufferings nor reproach, nor life, nor death, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Amen.

XIV.

FOR A BLESSED IMMORTALITY,—WITH AN EXULTING ANTICIPATION OF THE GRAND SCENES THAT ARE YET TO BE DISCLOSED IN THE MATERIAL AND IN THE MORAL KINGDOM.

PSALM ciii. 23. *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

PSALM xxxvi. 9. *With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light.*

Soon, O God, I shall close my eyes on all the things that are done under the sun. But blessed be thy name, that thou permittest us to look for “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

I have hitherto seen but a small portion of thy works. Yet these are of surpassing beauty,—and richly display thy wisdom, and power, and goodness. But oh! what scenes are yet to open upon the view of those who shall have put off this mortal tabernacle, and shall be permitted to contemplate the wide extent of thy glorious dominions!

It is but an inconsiderable portion of thy providential dispensations that have as yet been made manifest to me in this world,—though that portion bears in it the evidence of a plan which is of boundless extent, of infinite grandeur, and of unsearchable wisdom. And, oh! how magnificent, then, must be the view which shall be expanded before the spirits of those who shall have escaped from the darkness and mystery of time, and who shall in thy light see clearly!

My continuance in this world has been but for

a little,—and all the generations of men are but “pilgrims and strangers upon earth.” But thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. When, therefore, the short-lived events of time have passed, I humbly hope to enter on scenes which shall be as enduring as they are glorious,—and which shall for ever open in increasing splendour on the souls that have been made perfect.

Many mysteries have seemed to mar the beauty of thy dispensations as we now behold them,—but though now I have seen through a glass darkly, then shall I see face to face,—all thy ways shall be justified,—and wisdom and goodness, of infinite length, and depth, and breadth, shall appear to have guided every thing that thou hast done.

I go not to the Dead but to the Living,—to the good and wise of all ages,—to Jesus, the Mediator between God and man,—to the company of the Apostles, and Martyrs, and Just men made perfect,—to the countless myriads of the intelligent servants of God. These are not dead but alive ;—and shall I soon, O my God, shall I, indeed, soon be one of them ?

Why, then, should I fear to die ? why should I not rather rejoice with a “joy unspeakable and full of glory ?

O make me strong in faith,—and help me to prepare myself for the struggle that is to break my connexion with this world, in an exulting belief, that the utmost sufferings of the present life, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed. For Christ’s sake. Amen.

XV.

FOR PARDON OF ANY ERRORS IN OUR RELIGIOUS BELIEF,
OR IN OUR GROUNDS OF TRUST.

MARK ix. 24. *Help thou mine unbelief.*

THOU knowest, O God, that not only is man weak in ability to do good, but apt also to entertain many errors, even when he thinks that he is judging rightly,—and that it is not in the power even of the wisest of mankind to form perfectly correct conceptions of thy nature, or of the principles of thine administration.

“Now we see through a glass darkly,”—“and every man liveth in a vain show.”

If then, O God, my religious views be in any respect erroneous in thy sight, O pardon mine errors, and enlighten me clearly in the things that belong to my peace.

If I have not properly apprehended the true grounds of a sinful creature's trust before thee—show me, O God, the insecurity of my foundation, and deal not severely with my involuntary mistakes.

Let none of my errors be the result of pride, of presumption, or of obstinacy,—but grant me the disposition of “a little child,” who is willing to sit down and receive divine wisdom at the feet of him whom thou hast sent.

Keep me from forming *unworthy* ideas of thy nature or dispensations,—and, oh! let me never entertain the belief, that thou canst be the enemy of any of thy creatures.

Yet, save me from presumptuous confidence,—

and while I humbly trust in thy goodness and mercy, as revealed, through Jesus Christ, in thy blessed word, may I also always keep in mind, that thou art a just God and a holy,—and that thou executest signal vengeance on those who presumptuously offend, or who show themselves insensible to great blessings.

In all things, O Lord, pity and forgive my errors,—grant me a sincere love of truth,—and help me to believe, that where men unwillingly err, thou wilt not be hasty to impute sin.

Enable me, also, to extend to the errors and frailties of my brethren, that forgiveness which I now, for Christ's sake, beg of thee.

In all my attempts to comprehend the truth, or to do thy will, let thy Holy Spirit enlighten and strengthen me,—and by his influence may I finally be presented faultless and blameless before thy presence, with exceeding joy, for Christ's sake,—to whom, with thee, and with the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

SHORT EJACULATIONS,
IN THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE,
TO BE USED BY THE SICK.

FATHER, of the spirits of all flesh,—Father of my spirit, and Former of my body,—by whom I have been wonderfully and fearfully made,—goodness and mercy have followed me all my days ;—all things work together for good to them that love thee ;—though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.

I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face before thee, for mine iniquities have gone over my head, and have become a burden too heavy for me to bear,—and this, O Lord, hath been my manner from my youth up, that I have not obeyed thy voice.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for thy great mercies' sake,—and, in the multitude of thy tender compassions, blot out mine iniquities.

As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,—for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust,—as far as the east is from the west, so far will he remove our transgressions from us.

Glory to God in the highest,—peace on earth,—good-will to the children of men.

It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

In all things he was made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for iniquity.

Look, look on me in the face of thine Anointed.

Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me,—cast me not away from thy sight, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

Lord, I believe,—help thou mine unbelief,—grant me the blessed hope of everlasting life,—grant me also charity, that most excellent of all gifts, the very bond of perfectness,—without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.

Lord, perfect the work of thine own hands,—and preserve me faultless, till the coming of Christ, with exceeding joy.

O Lord, bow down thine ear and hear,—open, Lord, thine eyes, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith thou hast afflicted me in thy fierce anger.

Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am weary of my life?

Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that my prayer should not pass through. Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? is his mercy clean gone for ever?

But this, O Lord, is mine infirmity,—I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

The God of patience and consolation grant that in patience I may possess my soul,—that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord,—and whether I die, I may die unto the Lord,—that whether, therefore, I live or die, I may be the Lord's.

Blessed be God, for his gracious promise, by the mouth of his holy servant—"When thou passest

through the waters, I will be with thee,—and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee,—when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

Now am I ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight,—I have finished my course,—I have kept the faith,—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life.

I will obey thy voice, O Lord, for thou hast said, Leave thy fatherless children to me, I will provide for them,—and thy widows, I will protect them.

Into thy hands, O Father, I commit my spirit.

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever ;—thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of thy dominion there shall be no end.

May thy kingdom come, and thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominions,—bless the Lord, O my soul.

What is my strength, that I should hope ? and what is mine end, that I should seek to prolong my life ? My strength faileth me, as for the light of mine eyes it also is gone from me,—the joints of my bones are loose, my knees smite one against another,—and I go to the gates of the grave.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

My heart and my strength fail,—but thou, O Lord, art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and

this mortal shall put on immortality,—death shall be swallowed up in victory.

O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.

For my friends and my brethren's sake, I will entreat thy peace. Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Behold all things shall be made new,—we look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

There shall be no more sorrow nor crying,—but God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes.

The redeemed shall walk there.

The Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all and in all.

Blessing, and honour, and praise, be to him that was slain,—and hath redeemed us to God,—and hath made us kings and priests unto God for ever.

Halleluiah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Amen and Amen.

PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

TO BE

READ BY THE SICK.

THE Memoirs which have been left of the eminently good, show that most of the following passages have been read by them, with much carefulness, and with great edification and delight, in the near prospect of leaving this world. The passages from the Psalms,—our Saviour's consolatory discourse in John's Gospel,—and the chapters from the Romans, have been especial favourites with the devout and afflicted. Those from Corinthians, from Hebrews, and from Peter, are also in a high degree beautiful, instructive, and consolatory.

Job, chap. iii. vi. vii. x. xiv. and xix.

Psalms, vi. xxxiv. xxxviii. cii. ciii. cxvi. cxlv.

Isaiah, chap. xl. liii.

John, chap. xiv. xv. xvi. xvii.

Romans, chap. v. vi. vii. viii.

1 Corinthians, chap. xv.

2 Corinthians, chap. v.

Hebrews, chap. xi. xii.

1 Peter, chap. i.

Finally, brethren, comfort one another with these words. And the God of peace shall be with you. Amen.

SECTION III.

PRAYERS TO BE SAID FOR SUCH SICK PERSONS
AS CANNOT BE SUPPOSED, FROM THE NATURE
OR VIOLENCE OF THEIR TROUBLE, TO JOIN
IN THE PETITIONS.

JAMES v. 16. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

THE foregoing Prayers are for the use of those whose sickness, though apparently unto death, is still of such a kind as permits them either to employ, in their own persons, the petitions that are prepared for them,—or, at least, to listen to others, and to join with them, while they are offering up requests for comfort and deliverance. A very great proportion, however, of those who are laid upon a sick-bed, are not included under this description.

Many of those diseases which terminate in death, *stupify* the powers of the sufferer long before the *last* struggle commences.

Other diseases of a peculiarly severe kind, *engage* the whole attention of the patient to *themselves*,—and unfit him for any continued exertion of devout feeling.

A third class of diseases,—such as all those which are accompanied with nervous irritation,—so *unsettle* the powers of apprehension or of feeling, that the calmness and solemnity of devotional

exercises are precluded, by the very nature of the complaint.

And, lastly, many excellent persons pass from life under a complete *derangement* of all their powers of body and of mind,—and are incapable even of anticipating the magnitude of the change which is about to overtake them.

Now a book of offices for the dying would evidently be very incomplete, which should contain no prayers adapted to such cases.

For though persons labouring under any of the foregoing complaints cannot themselves join in the petitions, there is no reason why earnest prayers to the Throne of Grace should not be offered in *their behalf*.

The most *natural feelings* of the human heart prompt those who are attending on the sick,—and whose hearts are devoutly disposed,—to this most becoming and Christian employment of the time which they can often spare from active offices to the sufferer.

Indeed, how can those solemn and thoughtful hours which intervene between the fulfilment of active duties for the relief of the distressed be more suitably employed?—or what exercises are more likely to render the sick chamber a place sacred to divine influences,—or to draw down a blessing upon the heart of him who witnesses the sorrows to which his fellow-creature is exposed?

Lastly, It must be remembered that there is a special promise given to such exercises,—“for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man,” says the Apostle, “availeth much;”—and it is for the sick that such prayer is supposed to be offered.

For all these reasons the Author has thought it proper that the following prayers should form a portion of this treatise.

I.

PREPARATORY PRAYER TO BE SAID BY THOSE WHO
MINISTER TO THE SICK.

PSALM X. 17. *Lord, thou hearest the desire of
the humble,—thou wilt prepare their heart.*

PROVERBS XVI. 1. *The preparation of the heart
in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from
the Lord.*

HEAVENLY Father, God of all grace and of all consolation, how great is the privilege which thou hast given to thy children, in permitting them to approach, at all times, thy throne of grace, and to make known their requests unto thee!—how consolatory is it to be assured, that thou hast promised a blessing to all those who seek thee in sincerity,—and that though thou hast thine own manner and time of fulfilling thy purposes, which are in all respects those of infinite wisdom and mercy, yet no sincere attempt to serve thee, and to obey thy invitation, shall be utterly lost!

Behold us, O Lord, who are now,—in this house of sorrow, and in this season of affliction,—earnestly desiring to be useful to those who are in trouble. Alas! O Lord, we are not worthy to ask thy favour for ourselves, far less to become suppliants for others. Yet blessed be thy name, that thou hast invited us to pray for the afflicted,—and hast promised, that, in their behalf, the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous shall avail much.

O Lord, prepare our hearts for doing this solemn duty in a becoming manner. Take away from

us all insensibility to the afflictions of the sufferer,—enable us to feel with true hearts for the great sorrows wherewith thou sometimes chastisest thy creatures,—and help us to put on bowels of compassion,—remembering, that we also are in the body, and compassed with infirmity.

Forbid, O heavenly Father, that our professions of compassion should, in any respect, be mingled with hypocrisy. Alas! O Lord, the heart of man is desperately wicked,—who can know it?—but, O create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us,—that, in the presence of the afflicted, we may commend ourselves to thine all-seeing eye, by doing all our services from a sincere wish to be useful.

Help us also, O God, to free our minds from all superstitious impressions. Let us not *presumptuously demand* relief,—but rather patiently wait till thou shalt see fit to send an answer to our prayers,—and may we rest in the assurance, that thou wilt make all things work together for good.

And grant, O Lord, that this sight of the sorrows to which humanity is subject, may humble, and purify, and disengage our hearts from this world,—may it dispose us to use the blessings of thy Providence with moderation,—and when we return to the active duties of our different stations in life, may it be with a more earnest desire to do thy will,—with a solemn belief, that *our* season of affliction also may be coming,—and with a firm assurance, that if thou hast thus called thy creatures to suffering in time, it is because our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are intended to work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Lord, thou hearest the desire of the humble,—thou wilt prepare their hearts. Be gracious unto

us,—and let thy Spirit dwell with us, while we are occupied with our present solemn duty. For Christ's sake. Amen.

II.

PRAYERS FOR A SICK PERSON, WHO CANNOT JOIN IN
THE DEVOTIONS.

PSALM XXV. 18. *O bring me out of my distresses.
Look upon mine affection and my pain, and for-
give all my sins.*

HEAVENLY FATHER,

THY throne of grace is ever open,—and thou knowest the more secret wants of those who cannot utter their requests in the words of men. Thou seest us by night and by day,—for thine “eye never slumbers nor sleeps.”

Thou also, O most merciful God, dost not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,—but as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Yet suffering, and even sore trouble, are part of the lot thou hast given to thy creatures,—and thou seest fit, for purposes of infinite goodness and wisdom, though we cannot at all times comprehend them, to try even those whom thou most approvest, with peculiarly severe afflictions.

Yes, O our God, it is a dark pilgrimage which thou hast appointed unto man, even before he has entered on the “Valley of the shadow of death,”—but we believe, that, even in that darkness, there is

a purpose of good to thy creatures,—and we desire to express our reliance on thy promised aid, in all our seasons of great sorrow.

Hear us then, O God, while we earnestly but humbly solicit thy favouring mercy in behalf of thine afflicted servant, for whose welfare our prayer is now made. Lord, rebuke not in thine anger, nor chasten in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy, O Lord, for thy servant is weak.* Lord, heal, for his bones are vexed,—his soul, also, is sore vexed,—and O lay not on him a burden heavier than he is able to bear.

But if it is still thy good pleasure to chasten and to try him, O strengthen him upon his bed of languishing, and make his bed in his sickness. Be merciful unto him a little, that he may recover strength before he go hence and be no more.

O merciful Father of men, blot out the iniquity of thine afflicted,—forgive all sins that may have been committed by him in thought, in word, or in deed,—especially, O Lord, lay not presumptuous sins to his charge, and take him into thy favour, for thy beloved Son's sake.

Grant unto him an interest in that plan of salvation which thou hast revealed through Christ Jesus our Lord,—make him one of those in whom thy soul delighteth,—and let his present sore afflictions be unto him but proofs of that paternal love with which thou regardest those whom thou chastisest.

Create in him, O Lord, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him,—may his soul be

* In this and other prayers the persons using them may adapt the petition to the sense of the afflicted, by occasionally inserting the pronoun "her" for "him."

washed, and sanctified, and justified,—and before “the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken,” may he be prepared for entering, without spot and blameless, into thy presence with exceeding joy.

Yes, O God, grant unto thy Servant who is now lying under thine afflicting hand, grant this last and greatest of all blessings, that the soul which thou hast sorely tried in time, may thereby be prepared for the joys of immortality,—and may be among the number of those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this purpose, O heavenly Father, adapt thyself to the peculiar situation in which thy Servant is now placed,—strengthen him for the endurance which thou hast seen fit to impose,—sanctify those trials which thou knowest to be necessary for the purposes of thy Providence,—and let thy good Spirit help our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered.

May the eternal God be the refuge of thy Servant, and underneath him be thine everlasting arms.

And grant, O God, that we who are in health, may remember how frail we are, and in how short a time all the beauty and strength of man may be made to consume away,—help us to be humble,—to use the world as not abusing it,—and so to walk with thee in time, that hereafter we may all meet in thy presence with exceeding joy. For our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

III.

PRAYERS FOR THOSE WHO ARE AFFLICTED IN MIND.

JOB vi. 4. *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit.*

FATHER of the spirits of all flesh, thou didst at first breathe into man the breath of life, and madest him a living soul,—thou gavest him more knowledge than the fowls of heaven, and more understanding than the beasts of the field,—thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast made him but a little lower than the angels.

But, alas! O Lord, thou also hast appointed that even this noblest prerogative of our nature must sometimes yield to the pressure of disease,—“the gold becomes dim, the most fine gold is changed,”—and thou sometimes takest even thine Elect unto thyself, from amidst an utter unconsciousness of the great change they are about to undergo.

Thy dispensations, O heavenly Father, are full of mystery, and sometimes they are fitted to awaken great fears in those who contemplate them,—yet blessed be thy name, that they are also full of wisdom, of righteousness, and of loving-kindness,—and we rejoice, amidst even the most mysterious and afflictive of thy dispensations, in believing, that all things shall at last be found to have been parts of one great and good scheme, which has had respect to the final welfare of all thy creatures.

O grant unto us the divine consolation which this great truth is fitted to convey to us, while we supplicate thy mercy in behalf of thy servant who

is now lying under the heavy visitation of a troubled spirit,—remove, if it be thy will, all darkness, and confusion, and despair,—and grant that, before the spirit is released from its connexion with time, it may be enabled to show forth thy loving-kindness in the land of the living.

And in the mean time, while trouble endureth, O let the covenant of thy peace be established,—grant those secret supports which thou canst dispense to the most afflicted spirit,—make all their bed to the distressed,—and preserve them from becoming the instruments of injury to themselves.

Above all, grant, O God, that, when the hour of separation from this world has come, the spirit may enter on “that rest which remaineth for the people of God,”—may it be made fit for everlasting life,—and be admitted to drink of those “rivers of pleasure which are at thy right hand for evermore.”

Grant also unto us, O God, a due improvement of this visitation. Enable us to keep our hearts with all diligence,—to trust always in thy mercy,—to avoid all sinful ways and violent passions,—and at last to resign ourselves with devout composure to whatever thy Providence may see fit to ordain for us.

Again, O God, for our Redeemer’s sake, we beseech thee, be merciful to thine afflicted servant,—and prepare us all for joining in thy heavenly kingdom, the great multitude of thy redeemed,—where there shall be no sorrow nor sighing, but where thou shalt wipe all tears from all eyes,—and where the *unclouded spirits* of thy chosen shall for ever see their Redeemer as he is.

To whom, with Thee and with the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

IV.

PRAYER TO BE SAID WHEN TROUBLE HAS BEEN MITIGATED.

PSALM CXLV. 14. *Thou upholdest all that fall, and raisest up all those that be bowed down.*

BLESS the Lord, O our souls, and let all that is within us be stirred up to bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits,—who forgiveth all our iniquities, who healeth all our diseases, who redeemeth our lives from destruction, who crowneth us with loving-kindness and with tender mercy.

Surely, O Lord, thou pitiest us as a Father pitieth his children,—thou afflictest not willingly, nor grieveest the Children of men,—all thy dealings with thy creatures are full of mercy and of loving-kindness, though to our shortsighted wisdom they sometimes seem also to be full of darkness and of mystery;—and thou wilt at last vindicate all thy ways, to the full satisfaction of all thy children.

Blessing and praise be to thy name, for the relief thou hast granted to thy servant, who is now lying under thine afflicting hand. O grant that it may be to all of us a token for good,—confirm the kindness thou hast already displayed,—and do thou, who commandest the sea and it is still, send to the sufferer, in the time and way that shall seem best to thy wisdom, a great deliverance, for thy mercy's sake.

Help us all to improve this season of relief, by a conscientious and affectionate discharge of all holy offices,—and a kind cultivation of all friendly

dispositions;—help us to make the joy as well as the sorrow of our hearts a sacrifice of our obedience, which shall be well-pleasing in thy sight,—and O grant that, whether thou dealest with us in severity or in gentleness, all things may work together to us for good.

Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from us,—nevertheless, not as we will, but as thou wilt. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever,—forsake not the work of thine own hands. To us to live may it be Christ,—and to die, may it be gain;—living or dying, may we be the Lord's.

Lord, perfect that which concerneth us. Accept our thank-offerings, and do not reject our prayers. And help us, not in words only, but in true sincerity of heart to say, The will of the Lord be done.

Lord, let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven,—and let all flesh bless thy holy name,—for ever and ever. Amen.

V.

PRAYER TO BE SAID FOR THE SICK, WHEN TROUBLE HAS
BEEN LONG CONTINUED.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 44. *Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, so that my prayers should not pass through.*

How awful, O Father of our spirits, and Former of our bodies,—how awful and how mysterious are

sometimes thy dispensations towards thy children of the dust !

"Thou hidest thy face,—thou coverest thyself with a cloud, so that our prayer cannot pass through,"—wearisome days and nights are appointed unto man before he is released from his trial,—and thou seemest, to our impatience, to have utterly forsaken the work of thine own hands.

But this, O Lord, is our infirmity,—and O pardon us for entertaining even a momentary distrust of thy fatherly compassion. Yes, blessed be thy name, because we have full assurance, that though we cannot always fathom thy counsels, they are yet all guided by perfect wisdom, and by boundless love,—and that when thou triest sorely the hearts of thy creatures, it is because their "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are intended to work out for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

O then, heavenly Father, "let patience have her perfect work,"—strengthen those whom thou afflictest to bear their trial unto the end,—sanctify to them this severe dispensation with which thou hast seen fit to visit them,—and prepare them for finally entering on the joy of their Lord.

And O grant that our endeavours to relieve the afflicted may not be overcome by the length of the endurance to which they are called,—may we consider ourselves as fellow-workers with thee for the good of thy children,—and be ready at all times, not only to rejoice with those who rejoice, but to weep with those who weep.

Above all, grant, O God, that when this long and sore trial has been completed, it may issue to all of us in permanent good,—may the soul that is to be released, be admitted to those rivers of pleasure which are at thy right hand for evermore,

—and may the solemn view of thy dispensations, which we who are to survive have witnessed in this affliction, dispose us all to “run with patience the race that is set before us,”—not expecting too much from any thing which this world can offer to us,—but ever looking to the time when we too must lie down on the bed of death,—and endeavouring so to order our ways, that our last hours may be full of peace,—and our final recompense an eternal weight of glory.

Be merciful to us, O Lord, and bless us, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

VI.

PRAYER TO BE SAID WHEN THE SICK PERSON IS APPARENTLY AT THE POINT OF DEATH.

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 27. *The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath me are the everlasting arms.*

Now, O Lord, fulfil, we beseech thee, the promise thou hast made to thy chosen,—“when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee,—and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee,—when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,”

Heart and strength are failing,—but be thou, O God, the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

Prepare thy servant for the last struggle,—let

"death be swallowed up in victory." Lord Jesus, receive this spirit into thy kingdom,—this day, if it be thy will that it shall be released this day, O Lord, let it be with thee in Paradise.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—the sting of death is sin,—and the strength of sin is the law,—but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Into thy hands, O merciful Saviour, we commit this departing spirit,—let Angels carry it into thy heavenly presence,—and having been prepared by suffering on this earth, let it now join the General Assembly of the Just made perfect;—and may we all come in our appointed times to the same blessed company,—not one of us being lost in that day when thou makest up thy jewels.

O Lord, hear,—O Lord, forgive,—and do unto us far above what we can ask or think, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SECTION IV.

PRAYERS TO BE SAID FOR THE YOUNG WHO ARE IN TROUBLE.

MARK. x. 4. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

OF all who are born, a far greater number pass into the eternal world in infancy or early life, than from any of the subsequent stages of our mortal journey. It is, accordingly, a rare thing to meet with a family which has not been called to mourn for the loss of some of its members, who have been taken away before they had incurred any actual guilt,—or, at least, from the first years of that career which they seemed to have been destined to run;—and as the hearts of parents when witnessing the distresses of their children,—often, alas! very severe and long-continued distresses,—are strongly prompted to look up for succour to him who pitieth us, even as a Father pitieth his Children,—so there are several circumstances which discriminate our affectionate interest in such Sufferers, from that which we take in the case of any other distresses,—and which, indeed, give a new and more instructive character to all our devout meditations.

The *innocence*,—the *helplessness*,—the *short* and *interrupted career* of the Sufferers,—and the unhesitating *confidence* with which we anticipate for them a blessed release from their distresses,—all conspire in giving this new and instructive character to the devotions which their situation prompts us to offer.

When the *mature in years* die, many solemn thoughts respecting the course they have run in life, and the failures of which they have been guilty, are apt to mingle with our feeling for the sufferings they have endured,—and God thus seems to have been dealing with them in their sorrows, chiefly, as an *Avenger* and *Judge*.—They have also tasted the ordinary portion that is given unto men of the good and of the evil,—the happiness and the misery,—that belong to the nature of which they have been made partakers—and though they have not reached the utmost limits of life, they have at least participated of all the varied sources of satisfaction or of sorrow which this world, even in its longest career, could have offered to them. We have, lastly, amidst such recollections, many solemn thoughts respecting the possible results of that account which must be given in to the universal Judge, by all who have passed through the snares and the temptations of life,—and we follow the souls, even of those who seem to us to have acted most successfully in life, into the land of Spirits with an awful anxiety, or at least an uncertain fear, lest their final portion should be determined rather by the amount of the evil than of the good which they have done.

But when we see *Children suffering*, we know that they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,—that God, consequently, cannot be treating them, in such sufferings, as a

Judge or an Avenger,—but as a Father who pitieth his children, and who has some gracious purpose in view for them, by all their afflictions;—and as they are called out of this life before they have received even the common portion of its goods, we not only feel a triumphant consciousness that existence is to be resumed by them in some greater though to us invisible scene, but that they shall undoubtedly, also, enter upon the arrangements of that scene as spirits destined for unending felicity.

Indeed, all the *Grand Truths* of religion assume a new, and more interesting, and beautiful aspect, when they are thus suggested to us by the sufferings of children, than they had ever assumed amidst any other circumstances. *Suffering* itself seems, then, to us but part of the universal, and therefore wise and good plan, according to which God is conducting all things for the perfecting of his works,—the *character of God*, also, presents itself to our thoughts as that of a Father who *pities* his Children, even while he afflicts them,—the *promise of immortality* is, perhaps, announced to us with more emphatic certainty from the broken and interrupted career of the young who die, than from any other event by which that most blessed of all hopes is set before us,—and in the *very transition* of these Innocents from this region of sorrow into the invisible kingdom, we have an evidence which cannot be overlooked, that this world is but a nursery for heaven,—or that Spirits are, *in fact*, at all moments passing from this earth, respecting whose future fate we can have no other thought, but that it is intended to place them in happiness everlasting.

Every thing about Religion thus becomes more beautiful, and certain, and interesting than before, when it is associated with the last agonies of those

who have not incurred that stain which *actual* sin has impressed on the works of God,—and a well-disposed heart will, therefore, most anxiously avail itself of every opportunity of fixing such impressions, by devotional duties,—for the impressions themselves are invaluable, being in truth Religion in its purest, and loveliest, and most useful form.

The Author has only farther to express a wish that he could have made this portion of his work more conformable to the impression which he has of its importance and interest ;—he can only hope, however, that he may be able to give to the prayers which the sufferings of the young suggest, the same simplicity which he has endeavoured to maintain throughout all the preceding portions of the work,—and he has little doubt, that if the meditations of parents are not led into a wrong train, their own hearts will, in such circumstances, supply all the strength of emotion which may be wanting in the prepared helps of those who cannot feel, even in their most highly-wrought moods, as the hearts of parents never fail to feel, when serious affliction and approaching death seem to be the portion of any of those whom God has made dear to them as their own lives.

The whole of the preceding reflections may be considered as embodied, with inimitable power and beauty, in those never-to-be-forgotten words of our blessed Lord, with which this section of the work is prefaced,—those few, but truly divine accents, so worthy of the affectionate Friend of Mankind, and so illustrative of his acquaintance with the actual arrangements of that invisible world, in intimate correspondence with which, he always represented himself as standing, even while he laboured among us “ full of grace and truth,”—“ Of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

I.

PREPARATORY PRAYER TO BE SAID BY THOSE WHO
MINISTER TO THE SUFFERINGS OF THE YOUNG.

PSALM ciii. 13. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

O God, thou hast graciously revealed thyself to us under the endearing character of our heavenly Father,—and it is also the declaration of thy word, that as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

O blessed God, how much comfort and strength is comprised in the gracious title thou hast thus condescended to assume!—and how does it encourage us at this trying season to plead before thee, our own interest in the welfare of our children,—that thou mayest remember thy covenant and memorial, and the name whereby thou art called,—and show unto us, in this season of tribulation, that thou art indeed the Father of all them that call upon thee!

Alas! O our Father, trouble and death, under thine administration, are permitted to fall even on those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,—and sore, indeed, is the trial to which thou callest us, in making us witnesses of the sorrows of those who cannot express their afflictions by the ordinary symbols of human sorrow.

But, O blessed God, let us neither repine at thy dispensations, nor ever presumptuously and foolishly imagine that they are not marked by profound and fatherly wisdom, though we may not, at

all times, be able to fathom thy counsels. Yes, O God, let us rather believe that thou doest all things well,—and that when we have obtained a wider view of thy dispensations, and of the infinitely-extended arrangements of thy kingdom, we shall be made to perceive, that all things have been working together under the guidance of perfect wisdom, for the production of good.

Help us faithfully and patiently to minister to those whom thou hast intrusted to our care,—and O grant that, when our hearts and imaginations are tossed upon a sea of doubts and of darkness, we may find refuge for ourselves, and for those whom thou hast given us, in thine everlasting arms,—and there be at peace, as in a haven of rest.

Yes, O our God, thou hast declared, that as a father pitieth his children, so thou pitiest them that fear thee;—thou hast also set forth him, who came among us as the Deliverer of our Souls, under the title of thy beloved Son,—and thou hast thus consecrated our human affections, by making them the symbols of thy greatest mysteries and most beneficent purposes.

While then, O God, we look with the hearts of parents on the weakness and the sufferings of our children, do thou also look with kindred affection on us and on our sorrows,—and help us, by thy grace, to do and to think only those things which shall be acceptable in thy sight, for the sake of Christ, thy Son, and our elder Brother, who is now passed into the heavens,—and with whom thou art always well pleased.

O hear these our humble prayers,—and sanctify to us this season of trial,—for thy great mercies' sake. Amen.

II.

PRAYER TO BE SAID FOR A CHILD IN THE BEGINNING OF
TROUBLE.

PSALM ciii. 15. *As for man, his days are as grass,
—as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*

BEHOLD us, O our God, in this season of sorrow, and look with a gracious eye upon us, and on this little one, on whom thou hast now laid thine afflicting hand.

Surely, O God, thou delightest not in the unhappiness of thy children,—for thou art kind even to the unthankful and the unholy,—and thou often savest even those who have gone far in sin, from the many dangers that threaten them with ruin.

Yet it is part of thy mysterious but wise and good dispensations, that even these little ones should sometimes be visited with sore affliction,—and wearisome days and months of suffering are appointed to them,—while they have yet scarcely tasted any of the blessings which have been ordained to sweeten unto man this pilgrimage of life.

O forbid, heavenly Father, that we should ever doubt of the perfect wisdom, and righteousness, and loving-kindness of thy dispensations;—may we rather be led, by these mysterious parts of thy Providence, to extend our view to those greater and more enduring arrangements, of which all that we now see is but a part,—and, in this extent of view, may we be enabled to be “strong in faith, giving glory to God,”—who, in all things, is working out for us the good plans of his goodness.

If this affliction has befallen the child for any thing that we have done amiss in thy sight, Lord, show us our error and our sin,—and dispose us to turn with full purpose of heart and with unfeigned penitence to the way of thy commandments;—if there be any guilt, in any part of the conduct of any member of this household,—for which sin thou hast thus seen fit to punish us,—Lord, help us to purify ourselves from all that is hateful in thy sight,—and O let not this little One perish,—because thou hast found us to be unworthy of such a blessing. Grant us true seriousness and devotion of mind,—sanctify to us this trouble,—and let it be to us for good, after many days.

And, O heavenly Father, hear us, while we lift up our hearts and voices in earnest but humble prayer for the removal of this affliction. Direct, we beseech thee, to such means as, under thy blessing, may be instrumental in alleviating and removing the disease,—and do thou, by thy good Providence, give effect to all remedies,—for unless thy blessings go with them, all help of man is vain.

Heavenly Father, let not this little One be cut off,—but as thou hast granted an entrance into thy earthly kingdom, O continue the blessing, if it be consistent with the purposes of thy Providence, that the child may yet see much good in life,—may serve thee among thy Chosen,—and be instrumental in promoting the purposes of thy Providence,—and that we all may have cause, on account of this deliverance, to bless and to magnify thy holy name.

And help us, O Lord, while affliction continueth, to bear it with calmness and with patience,—trusting all our concerns to thy fatherly bosom, and

resting in an assured confidence that thou wilt make all things "work together for good."

O Lord, let thy blessing be upon us and our little Ones,—sanctify this house,—and according as we have seen evil, so let us, in thy good time, experience good,—“let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us,—yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it.”

“O be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause the light of thy countenance to shine on us,”—and as a token of thy favour, grant deliverance to our beloved Sufferer from this sore trouble,—for our Redeemer’s sake. Amen.

III.

PRAYERS TO BE SAID WHEN THERE ARE SYMPTOMS OF
RELIEF IN THE SUFFERINGS OF THE YOUNG.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 32. *Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.*

ACCEPT, O Lord, our heartfelt acknowledgments for the mercy thou hast vouchsafed to us in granting a temporary relief from this great affliction wherewith thou hast visited us, and those who are dearer to us than our own lives. O confirm, we beseech thee, these tokens of thy favour,—perfect the recovery for which thou hast caused us to hope,—grant a blessing with all the exertions that are used for effecting the removal of the disease,—

suggest, we entreat thee, such means as may be useful for attaining this object,—and let us all yet have cause to bless thee for confirmed health, and the prospect of active usefulness in thy kingdom upon earth.

We have professed submission to thy will, when our hearts were bowed down in hopeless grief. O grant that, in this hour of renovated hope, our joy may not exceed the bounds of prudence and propriety ;—may we remember that all events are still at thy disposal,—and that, even in our happiest and apparently most prosperous circumstances, we know not what a day may bring forth.

Yet, O Lord, forgive us, if we are wrong in humbly asking that this little One may yet live to serve thee in the land of the living,—that thy wonderful works and ways may become the source of those innumerable joys which thou hast fitted them to awaken in the breasts of those who pass through life “pure in heart,”—and that our place in life may be supplied by One who has early been tried by suffering,—and who has been prepared, by such afflictions, for being among “the Excellent Ones of the earth.”

In all events, O heavenly Father, keep us humble and resigned. The Lord gave, and the Lord may take away,—blessed be the name of the Lord.

Heavenly Father, not our will, but thine be done.

Yet, O Lord, be merciful to us,—and continue thy promised aid, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

IV.

PRAYER TO BE SAID WHEN THE SUFFERINGS OF A CHILD
HAVE BEEN SEVERE AND OF LONG CONTINUANCE.

JOB xiii. 25. *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?*

MOST gracious God, in whose hands is the breath of every living thing,—who sendest trouble, and causest joy to arise upon those who are in heaviness,—who hast no pleasure in the afflictions of thy children,—and all whose ways are loving-kindness and tender mercy!

“How long, O God, shall we cry unto thee, and thou wilt not hear? How long shall we cry unto thee out of violence, and thou wilt not save? Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, so that our prayer cannot pass through.”

“O that we knew where we might find thee, that we might come even to thy seat. We would order our cause before thee,—we would fill our mouths with arguments.”

“Hast thou forgotten to be gracious? Is thy mercy clean gone for ever? Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?”

Yet, O Lord, we are very imperfect judges of the propriety of those petitions which we most earnestly make unto thee,—for thou dost sometimes punish the presumption of men by *granting* their requests,—and thou sometimes also *retainest* thy blessings to be showered on them even while thou shuttest thine ear to the voice of their supplications.

Thou alone, O our God, thou alone canst give relief in this season of our great sorrow,—for without thee the help of man is vain,—and thou dost sometimes evince the Sovereignty of thy dispensations by causing light to arise when our darkness is most profound, and when all hope has passed away.

O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive,—defer not, but send us help out of thy holy sanctuary. Grant unto our little One such relief as seems best unto thy perfect wisdom,—supply, during this distress, those secret aids and alleviations which thou knowest to best suited to the circumstances of the Sufferer,—and let the soul which is so tried be prepared, by this trial, for an inheritance among the Just made perfect.

“To it to live, may it be Christ,—and to die, may it be gain.”

Help us, O Father, to bow implicitly to thy dispensations,—to be patient, and dutiful,—and resigned,—and not in words only, but from the bottom of our hearts, to say, Father, not our will, but thine be done.

O sanctify to us this severe dispensation,—may all love of sin be destroyed, and all holy purposes cherished within us,—and may our future days be spent under the serious impressions which this scene of suffering has awakened.

Lord, let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the shadow of thy wings, O Lord, do we take refuge, till this great calamity be overpast.

Hear, Lord, these our earnest prayers, and do unto us, and to those who are dear to us, above what we can ask or think,—for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

V.

PRAYER FOR THE YOUNG, WHEN THE TROUBLE SEEMS
ABOUT TO TERMINATE IN DEATH.

MATTHEW XVIII. 10. *In heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

How consolatory, O our God, is the thought, that "life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel,"—that "Christ is risen as the first-fruits of them who sleep,"—and that "those who sleep in Jesus, God will at last bring with him."

And blessed, also, be thy name for the assurance, "that not one of these little Ones shall perish,"—that "in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of our heavenly Father,"—and that "of *such* is the kingdom of heaven."

O righteous Father, who hast been pleased to try this our little One with sore affliction,—grant a happy release from the severity of this trial,—may Angels of Mercy watch around the bed on which the Sufferer is laid, and when the spirit leaves its earthly tenement, may it be carried by these heavenly Messengers into bliss Everlasting.

Strengthen and console *us* in this hour of our sorrow,—and forbid, O heavenly Father, that any part of our conduct should be such as to expose us to thine anger.

May our future lives be more devoted to thy service than any part of our past conduct has been,—and considering that when our little One has gone from this world, we are indeed united to

thee, by the presence of a portion of ourselves already in thy heavenly kingdom, may we live as Heirs of the same glorious inheritance,—and as Beings who are persuaded that, in a very short time, we must stand before thee for judgment.

And, O grant, heavenly Father, that when our varied trials have been gone through, and we have each in our turn been gathered to our fathers, we may all meet in thy presence, not one of us being lost,—and may throughout eternity be employed in loving, and serving, and adoring thee,—being still united by the bonds that held us together in time,—and serving thee with only a purer obedience suited to our renovated and more perfect nature.

Thus, O Lord, may we who have been so nearly and tenderly related to each other in this world,—continue throughout eternity to be “a Family in heaven.”

SECTION V.

FUNERAL DEVOTIONS ADAPTED TO THE FORMS OBSERVED BY THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND.

REVELATIONS xiv. 13. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

IN most Christian countries a particular form of devotional service has been appropriated to the Burial of the Dead. Indeed, every heart must have felt that this is an occasion on which the consolations and hopes of religion come with peculiar power,—and, accordingly, the forms that have been adopted are, in most instances, and especially in the instance of the English Church, singularly beautiful and affecting.

The constitution of the Scottish Church, and the habits and views of the people of Scotland, do not admit of any formal service of this kind. But, perhaps, the want of it has been less felt in Scotland than it would have been among a people of different habits ;—and, indeed, there is something

about all the forms which are observed in Scotland on this occasion, that not only accords most strikingly with the unostentatious character of all our religious services,—but that has been felt by all observers of our ceremonies to be in affecting unison with the severe but simple and serious piety by which our people are distinguished.

The funeral ceremony, as it is observed in Scotland, is as follows :—

The Relatives and Friends of the Deceased are invited to assemble, commonly, an hour before the time when the funeral procession is to take place. A simple repast is prepared, suited to the circumstances and means of the family ;—a short prayer is said, craving a blessing, before the refreshment is handed round ;—sometimes a short thanksgiving is pronounced after this ceremony ;—the procession then moves slowly to the place of interment ;—the whole ceremony of interring the corpse is performed amidst the reverential silence of the attendants, the chief mourners commonly standing uncovered at the head of the grave ;—a silent sign of acknowledgment is made by the principal Mourner to the company, when the last turf has been laid, —and the attendants then disperse to their several homes, commemorating, by their conversation, the virtues of the Deceased, or with other reflections suited to the interesting character of the ceremony they have witnessed.

Such is the form observed by all ranks. Some objections, however, have been made to parts of this ceremonial, especially as it is employed by the *poorest* of the people,—and to a few observations on these objections, the Author now wishes to draw the attention of his readers.

In the first place, some Clergymen have an idea, that the wish on the part of the poor of making a

respectable appearance in their preparations for the repast that precedes the procession, occasionally leads them to more expense than is proper in their circumstances. The Author, however, has never witnessed any thing of this kind to which he has found reason to object ;—on the contrary, he has always observed the utmost decorum, and a singular feeling of propriety displayed by even the poorest of the people on such occasions ;—and every heart, surely, must sympathize with, and indeed commend, the very natural desire felt by survivors, even in the humblest ranks, that their deceased relative should not be left, in his funeral accompaniments, without some token of that respectability which it had been equally his wish and their own to maintain during life.

Indeed, the feeling which the people of Scotland manifest in this case, is but one instance of that virtuous pride which has distinguished them so honourably in all other respects,—and which has especially made them, in all preceding times, so unwilling to be, in any respect, dependent on the charity of the public ;—and when regarded in this light, their desire to furnish out a becoming service at the last, ought to be honoured and supported by all who wish to preserve among them the same honourable pride which has been attended with so many good effects, both on our ecclesiastical economy, and on the general character of our population.

In the second place, There seems to be no good reason for objecting to the *time* spent in this service,—because it is always in the option of those who are invited, either to come to the previous ceremony, or to defer their attendance till the actual movement of the procession. Besides, without some previous time allowed, mourners from a

distance could not, in country parishes, at least, calculate their time of arrival with sufficient accuracy.

In the third place, The *prayers* said at the distribution of the repast, ought to be short and impressive,—for the mind is not then in a condition to attend either to lengthened petitions, or to irrelevant considerations;—and every word, therefore, ought to have a reference to the thoughts that are presumed to be present to all hearts,—namely the Grave,—the Resurrection of the Dead,—and Immortality through Christ.

In the fourth place, The *Repast* itself is a ceremony of great Antiquity, and one which, it ought never to be forgotten, has been consecrated by the highest of all authorities, and for the most impressive of all Solemnities. It is in truth, so far as the *mere Ceremony* is concerned, the very same which was adopted by our Redeemer, when, on the eve of his death,—“he took bread, and blessed it,—and gave also the cup to his disciples, saying, This do in remembrance of me.”

In the fifth place, The *want of a Clergyman* at the grave, uttering the sublime Promise of the Resurrection of the Dead, in the words of Divine inspiration—is the chief deficiency in this ceremony. But the peculiarly devout, and reverential, and serious habits of the Scottish people, have rendered this want almost nugatory;—and the three following directions seem to comprise all that is necessary to render the service perfect in its kind, viz.

1st, That while the act of interment is proceeding, there should be *no crowding*, on the part of attendants, around the grave.

2d, That during the same ceremony, no irrele-

vant conversation should take place among those who are present. And,

3d, That each individual should, for himself, endeavour to direct his thoughts to such subjects as are suited to the impressive nature of the ceremony that is performing.

These rules being observed, the form may be considered as singularly well suited to the *general habits* of our people,—conformable to the *simpli-city* that reigns throughout all the other parts of our religious service, and, indeed, in unison with the unostentatious character of the *Christian dispensation* itself.

In general, it is so conducted, that Strangers have been much impressed with its singular propriety and effect.

Although, however, no *prescribed Forms* of Devotion are used in our Funeral Service, this is no reason why devotional Services should not be willingly indulged in by the relations of the deceased, in their own homes, both before and after the Funeral procession has left the house. Indeed, the want of any such prescribed form seems to render such private devotions peculiarly suitable and necessary ;—and the Author of this treatise has, accordingly, been influenced by these considerations, in adding the Prayers which follow, under the title of a “Funeral Service adapted to the Habits of the Scottish People.”

I.

PRAYER TO BE SAID WHILE THE DEAD BODY REMAINS IN
THE HOUSE.

JOB ii. 10. *Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?*

O God, Father of the spirits of all flesh, "thou turnest man to destruction, and thou sayest again, Return, ye Children of men,—for a thousand years are in thy sight as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night."

Alas! O Lord, thou hast seen fit to "take away from us the desire of our eyes with a stroke;"—thou hast darkened our habitation by the shadow of death;—and we are now prostrate before thee, in this house of sorrow and of humiliation, to ask of thy fatherly mercy that council and those aids which, in such seasons, thou only canst give.

Enable and dispose us, O our God, to read, in this event, the fulfilment of the denunciation made to mankind, when thou didst at first set life and death before them,—and gavest them their place as part of the great Family of thine intelligent offspring. In that day, O Lord, thou didst declare, that in the day in which thy commandment should be broken, death should enter into this portion of thy dominions,—and thy displeasure should be manifested against sin, by this awful and appalling termination of their earthly existence, to every soul of man that has had life.

And now, O God, in fulfilment of thy threatening, death *has* passed, and is constantly passing "upon all men, because all have sinned." Even

those who have made it their endeavour to serve thee in life, are not exempted from this final calamity,—and we are now mourning, in thy presence, because the fulfilment of this threatening has been manifested, by the taking away of one who was intimately related to us, from the society and the endearments of this our common home.

O God, humble us before thee, with true sorrow, for our own offences, and for the sins of the whole Family of Man;—and let this our hour of prayer be an hour of heartfelt humiliation, because we too have partaken of the common guilt of our nature,—and because we are, therefore, all under the sentence which condemns us to dissolution.

Yet, O merciful Father, blessed be thy name,—and help us to rejoice with true Christian joy in the assurance,—that this great infliction, to which thou hast subjected our human nature, is not left without hope, and without a remedy. Herein, indeed, was love worthy of the perfect goodness and compassionate character of God, that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,”—and that, as a token of thy approbation of his endurance, thou didst also “raise him from the dead, and hast made him the first-fruits of them that sleep.”

“Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits,—who forgiveth all our iniquities,—who healeth all our diseases,—who redeemeth our lives from destruction,—who crowneth us with loving-kindness and with tender mercy.”

And, oh! for ever blessed be thy name, that though the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, thou hast given us “the victory” over death “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Yes, O our God, still further blessed be thy

name, that the awful frustration of our earthly hopes by death, has been so overruled by thy good and wise Providence, as to be the means of carrying forward the expectations of thy Chosen to a far greater and better life, which is reserved for them in heaven ;—yes, blessed be thy name, that he who died for us and rose again, also went visibly up into the heavenly kingdom, as the “Fore-runner” of his people,—and that “all power is now committed unto him in heaven and on earth, that he may prepare as many as thou hast given him to be partakers of his glory, and hereafter to reign with him in life everlasting.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” “This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall be clothed with immortality ;”—“though now we see not our Redeemer, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,”—“knowing that we shall yet be like him, when we shall see him as he is,”—“and that mortality shall be swallowed up of life.”

Heavenly Father, O sanctify to us this great affliction,—this darkening and humiliating dispensation of thy Providence. May it be the means of leading us to just views of our own characters, and of thy providential arrangements ;—may it lessen our undue attachment to worldly concerns,—our forgetfulness of the awful and enduring interests of eternity ;—and may it so bring home all the solemn lessons of our faith to our hearts, that, henceforth, our profession of Christianity may be not mere form and show, but the experience of whatever in religion is vital, and spiritual, and regenerating.

May we never forget the important lessons which this event has taught us. May we especially ever

be thankful, that "Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,"—and that we have thus a blessed assurance, that the nature which he so honoured must be precious in thy sight, even amidst the humiliation of death,—and that thou wilt at last raise it to immortal blessedness.

Make us truly thankful for the atonement which Christ made in our behalf;—and, casting aside all our own righteousness as pleas of justification in thy sight, may we seek for reconciliation only through him in whom thou art always well-pleased.

And, oh! grant that we may carry with us through life, a becoming sense of the high privilege which thou hast given to us, by inviting us to approach thy throne of grace, through one who was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,—but who is now "our Advocate with the Father,"—and who is "for ever making intercession for us" at thy right hand.

Lord, grant us an abiding sense of the great honour of being permitted to hold communion with thee by prayer. May this house be sanctified by the influences of thy Spirit descending upon all our hearts;—and henceforth may all our days be holy unto the Lord,—that at last we may all come, each in our appointed time, to the joy of our Lord,—and be partakers, through eternity, of the blessedness of thy redeemed,—“not one of us being lost.”

O Lord, pardon our sins, and hear these our humble prayers, for thy beloved Son's sake,—to whom with thee, and with the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

II.

ANOTHER PRAYER WHICH MAY BE SAID WHILE THE
BODY REMAINS IN THE HOUSE.

JOB i. 21. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath
taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

HEAVENLY Father, how ought we to rejoice and be thankful for the great privilege thou hast granted to us, in permitting us, at all times, and especially in our seasons of perplexity and sorrow, to approach thy Throne of Grace, that we may receive "mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, in our time of need!"

Surely, O Lord, it is good for us thus to cast all our cares upon thee,—and in thy fatherly love to rest assured, that thou canst make all things work together to us for good.

O Lord, comfort us with those divine consolations which thou only canst give;—in this season of sorrow, send thy good Spirit into our hearts, to take away all repining and too anxious thoughts,—to give us all peace and joy in believing,—and, especially, to dispose us to look to thy hand in this awful visitation, being firmly persuaded that thou hast done it for purposes of mercy, if we duly improve our affliction,—and that, therefore, we ought "to be still," and know that thou art the disposer of the lots of all flesh.

Thou, O Lord, hast formed the heart of man to pour forth tears of agony when those to whom it was attached in life have been taken away,—and thou art not displeased with such grief,—when it is of a proper kind,—proceeding from true feeling;—

and not carried to such a length as either to hurt our own nature, or to lessen our trust in thy good and wise dispensations. Grant us, we beseech thee, tender feelings, but yet meek and submissive dispositions;—and thus, O Lord, may we feel, that “the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting,” and that by “the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.”

Strengthen us, O God, for the peculiar and trying duties which this calamity now calls us to perform;—may we show, by the resignation, the firmness, the meekness, and the good hope towards God which we now indulge, that we are indeed actuated by the spirit of disciples of Jesus,—and may others take notice of us, that we have so learned in the school of Christ, as to be able, by thy grace, both to conduct ourselves as those who sorrow not without hope, and to be examples to others whom thou mayest call to similar sufferings.

And, oh ! heavenly Father,—Source of all good gifts,—sanctify to us this affliction.—If there be any secret sins in our tempers or conduct which we have not studied to subdue, or of the existence of which we have not been sufficiently aware, may this visitation now lead us to discover our errors, and to root out from our hearts the evil and the destructive thing. If we have been too much attached to temporal enjoyments, may we now begin to view them as they ought to be viewed by those who are but “pilgrims and sojourners upon earth.”—If we have not paid due attention to the things of immortality, may we now begin to act as beings who have a far greater interest than any which is connected merely with this world,—and giving up our whole hearts to thy law, and to the impression of things heavenly and eternal, may we live under an habitual and lively sense of those great concerns

which belong to us as beings who are "to live for ever."

And blessed be thy name, that it is thy prerogative to bring "good out of evil." Let then, O Lord, this temporary affliction terminate to us in good ;—may this house, which has been darkened by this sore visitation, be yet enlightened by the sunshine of thy favour,—and thus may we yet find that all things are, indeed, working together for good to them that love thee, and that keep thy commandments.

Lord, prepare us for the trying hour which is now before us,—when the shadows of the Mourners shall darken our habitation,—when the voice of weeping and of sore lamentation shall be heard from those whose hearts thine arrows have pierced,—and when we shall take a last farewell, even of the cold remains which still are dear to us, as the ruined tabernacle of the departed.

In thee, O Lord, and "in the shadow of thy wings, do we put our trust, till this calamity be overpast." O let this visitation be so improved by us, that the *destroying* Angel may stay his hand, and that Ministers of *mercy* may now descend to comfort and strengthen us.

Now "the good Lord bless and keep us,—the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and give us peace," for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

III.

SHORT PRAYER OR GRACE TO BE SAID AFTER THE MOURNERS HAVE ASSEMBLED, AND BEFORE THE FUNERAL ELEMENTS ARE DISTRIBUTED.

PSALM XC. 12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

FATHER of the spirits of all flesh, thou at first gavest us our place among thy rational creatures, and hast led us, all our days, through the varied changes of this mortal life ;—and in the time predetermined by thine infinite wisdom, and by the series of causes which thou hast established, we again return to the dust, and our spirits are reunited to the innumerable multitude of thy Spiritual Host.

Help us to meet all the dispensations of thy providence with suitable dispositions of mind,—and having been diligent and conscientious in the discharge of all active duties during life, may we be ready when the commandment has gone forth, to resign our own spirits, and those of our friends, into thy paternal hands, with humble submission to thy dispensations, and with an assured hope of a resurrection through Christ.

God of all consolation, be merciful to all who are in this house,—and as thou hast darkened this habitation by “the shadow of death,” O let also the light of thy countenance arise on it, in due time,—and make it to rejoice as a tabernacle which thou hast chosen for thyself.

Heavenly Father, be with us in the solemn duty to which we are now called,—and when we see

“dust returning to dust,” and all earthly labours terminated in the grave, may we be enabled to look forward, with the hope of Christians, to the day when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.”

Hear, heavenly Father, these our prayers, and let the gracious light of thy countenance now fall on us, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

IV.

ANOTHER SHORT PRAYER FOR THE SAME OCCASION.

PSALM ciii. 6. *The place thereof shall know it no more.*

How well, O God, does it become us, assembled as we now are to perform the last offices to the departed, to call to mind, with true thankfulness, the great hopes and consolations which thou hast given us in Christ Jesus our Lord;—by which hopes and consolations our situation is so gloriously distinguished from that of “those who sit in the region of darkness, and in the shadow of death!”

It is to thy blessed Word and Gospel, indeed, that we owe our sense of the evil of sin;—but blessed be thy name, that it is to it also we are indebted for the assurance, that our sins may be forgiven,—and that as death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned, so the gift of God, which is eternal life, has been offered to all who believe in him who gave his life as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,"—and ever blessed be thy name, that thy beloved Son not only died, the Just for the unjust, that he might reconcile us to God, but that he also rose again as "the first-fruits of them who sleep."

Still further, O our God, we ascribe blessings unto thy name, because having raised thy Son from the dead, thou didst also call him visibly to thy right hand, and hast thus signified to all his followers, that such is the honour for which they too are destined, if, like him, they are faithful, even unto death, in the course of duty and of suffering which thou hast appointed for them.

May these great hopes now be present to our minds, and fill us with all joy and peace in believing;—and while we accompany the remains of the departed to the repose of the grave, and anticipate the time when we must, each of us, lie down in the same narrow house,—may our souls be elevated and cheered by the discoveries of thy word,—and, as good Servants of Christ, may we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Comfort those who are left destitute,—supply the place of those whom thou hast taken away,—and from this, as from all the other parts of thy wise dispensations, cause good to arise out of evil, in thine own time, for our Redeemer's sake,—to whom with thee, and with the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

PRAYER TO BE SAID AT ANY TIME AFTER A FUNERAL.

PSALM XC. 15, 16. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.*

Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. .

HEAVENLY Father, in whose hands is the breath of every living thing,—who gavest us our place in life, and all the blessings that have made up our portion upon earth,—and who, in thine own good time, takest away our breath, and we return unto the dust, out of which we were created, help us, also, O our God, to keep in mind, that the part of us which is destined to return to the dust, is not our better or more enduring part;—that we have, indeed, been gifted with “immortal” spirits,—and that those who have now left the abode and the society of men, have entered into communion with the vast multitude of thy spiritual and immortal Host.

Be gracious, O God, to us who still remain amidst the cares and corruptions with which time abounds. Behold us with a merciful eye in this our season of peculiar sorrow,—and support and comfort us for the loss of those who lately kneeled along with us in devout supplication on this footstool of thy throne, but who are now in thy presence, and removed from all the interests that agitate the hearts of those who are still pilgrims of time.

Grant us, O God, a sanctified use of this domestic affliction. May it dispose us to examine our hearts and our ways, and to turn, with full purpose of heart, to the path of thy commandments. "Search us, O God, and try our hearts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

Help us henceforth to look with subdued attachment on all the good things that belong to us in time. May we ever remember, that these are given us as but incentives to a steadfast obedience to thy commandments,—and that great indeed will be our guilt and our punishment, if, having been favoured above other men, we shall at last be found to have only made our blessings the occasions of pride, and of contempt of thy authority.

Enable us to devote ourselves with full purpose of heart to the discharge of all the duties committed to us by our place in this world ;—and, considering the station we now occupy as the appointment of God for the trial of our fidelity, may we so "be faithful in a few things, that hereafter we may be made rulers over many things."

May we henceforth be actuated by a more earnest and abiding desire for the spiritual welfare of our immortal part ;—may our religion be of that pure and genuine kind, which elevates, and warms, and sanctifies all the affections and principles of our nature,—and may we, like good servants of our Master, "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

May we be "followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises ;"—above all, may we set the example of our blessed Redeemer continually before us,—and like him, may we "run with patience the race set before us,—looking

unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

O God, send down thy good spirit to confirm us in all holy purposes, and to sanctify us wholly,—that so "our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

"Now, O our God, be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause the light of thy countenance to shine upon us. Make us glad, according to the days in which thou hast afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil,—and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us,—yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it."

Keep us in fervent love with each other while we sojourn together upon earth, and grant us all a happy meeting in thy heavenly kingdom, for our Redeemer's sake,—to whom with thee, and with the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

VI.

ANOTHER PRAYER TO BE SAID AFTER THE DEATH OF
ANY MEMBER OF A FAMILY,

I JOHN V. 11. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.*

HEAVENLY FATHER,

How great is the privilege and the honour which thou hast granted to us in permitting us to hold communion with thee by prayer! Yes, O God, thy throne of grace is ever open,—and mankind, over all the earth, are not only permitted but invited to approach that throne, with the blessed assurance, that “him who cometh unto thee thou wilt in no wise cast out.”

To whom, O God; can we come, in moments of sorrow, but unto thee, “for thou hast the words of eternal life!”—and thou hast been pleased graciously to instruct us by thy Son, that our frail and passing life, which is spent amidst the cares, and sins, and incessant changes of this earth, is but preparatory, to those who obey the terms which thou hast proposed, to their entrance on a life which shall never end, and to their admission to “those rivers of pleasure which are at thy right hand for evermore.”

O make us sensible of the value of this great hope which has been set before us by the Gospel of thy Son,—and grant that the blessed prospect of everlasting life may so influence our hearts and conduct that we may be prepared, when our fleet-

ing day of life is past, to join the great multitude of thy redeemed, who, from all the ages of time, and all the countries of this earth, "shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God."

Lord, thou hast especially invited us, on this occasion, to the indulgence of such thoughts of our immortal destiny, by having called from our society one who was "near and dear to us,"—and of whom we cannot now think, but as of a Spirit that has at last "entered into rest."

May this awakening dispensation, of which we have been the witnesses and subjects, dispose us so to perform the duties that may yet be set before us in life, that, having "been faithful over a few things, we may hereafter be made rulers over many things."

May all undue attachment to worldly blessings be subdued in us,—and, considering ourselves as "pilgrims and strangers upon earth," may we be always ready to say, when our earthly comforts fail us, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Help us also, O God, to look habitually to the great concerns of the future life;—and may this impression give to all our religious duties and feelings that high and spiritual tone, which alone is suitable to the contemplation of the great interests with which those feelings and duties are connected.

Bind us more and more in love to each other, as our little company is broken down,—and may we have an earnest, in our affectionate discharge of all social duties in time, of our final re-union in that better world, where all discord shall cease, and where "God shall be all and in all."

May our hearts be warmed by true love to him

who gave himself for us,—and who is now gone, as our Forerunner, into thy heavenly kingdom,—on his merits may we rest all our hopes of acceptance in thy sight,—and, like the great Apostle of our faith, may we be able to say, “Who now shall separate us from the love of God?—who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?—it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again,—who also is at the right hand of God, and who maketh intercession for us.”

O grant unto us that good Spirit whom Jesus promised to his followers, as their Comforter and Instructor, after he himself left this world to enter on the glory which thou hadst prepared for him. By his blessed influences may that which in us is evil, be purified,—that which is weak, be strengthened,—that which is dark, enlightened,—that which is low, elevated,—that which is cold, warmed,—that which is wanting, supplied,—so that, at last, we may be presented, “without fault and blameless, before thy presence, with exceeding joy.”

Grant us, O Lord, if it be consistent with thy will, a calm departure from this life;—may we “fall asleep” in Jesus,—and may the grave be to us as a “bed of rest,” after the fatigues and labours of our day of life.

But if it should seem meet to thine infinite wisdom that we should be tried before our departure by great or by long-continued sufferings,—and it is often, O God, from the midst of great tribulation that thou callest thy Redeemed unto thyself,—O grant that our earthly endurances may work out for us an exceeding weight of glory,—and that we may so improve our trial, that our last agony in time may be the termination of all the

sorrows that are ever to fall on us, as subjects of thine everlasting kingdom.

Heavenly Father, help us in all things to be resigned to thy will,—to believe that all things are working together for good to them that love thee,—and to rest in the assurance, that though we may not be able to trace all the purposes of thy dispensations, yet nothing shall eventually be found to have happened, which has not been characterized by boundless wisdom, and goodness, and mercy.

In this blessed assurance we now resign ourselves to the disposal of thy Providence. Lord, bless us, and cause the light of thy countenance to shine on us ;—and, oh ! grant, that when we have been called, each in his appointed time, from this world of sin, we may all at last meet in thy heavenly kingdom, not one of us being lost.

Hear, O God, these our prayers, and pardon all our offences,—and do unto us above what we can ask or think, for our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

PART THIRD.

THINGS TO BE DONE BY THE DYING.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 1. "Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

It is not only necessary that those who are apparently approaching the termination of life should have their understandings enlightened by such views of the character of God, and of their own place and hopes under his administration, as are suited to their awful situation, and conformable to the genius of the Christian faith,—and that, in the second place, they should be fervent and diligent in the performance of all devout and holy exercises,—there are, also, certain *actions* which it is becoming and necessary that they should perform, if they are in such a state of body and of mind, as permits them to engage in the performance of any deliberate and voluntary actions ;—and this third part of the treatise now offered for their use, is accordingly intended to exhibit a very succinct view of such actions.

It has been already hinted, that some of those who are dying cannot be required to attend to such

actions,—because neither their state of body nor of mind fits them for performing them. Yet, in a great variety of cases, the dying *are* permitted to look forward to the conclusion of their mortal history with more self-possession, and with the prospect of a longer or shorter time which may still intervene before their last struggle shall come ;—and in all such cases, the work of preparation for death is not completed till such of the actions at least, which are now to be enumerated, as are suitable to the circumstances of the dying person, have been punctually and conscientiously performed.

These actions may be classed under the three following heads:

First, Setting right any thing in our affairs that may have gone into derangement, or that may still be put into a better condition.

Secondly, Doing all that we can to be reconciled to those with whom we may have lived at enmity,—or preparing ourselves to depart from life in a spirit of forgiveness and of good-will to every human being.

Thirdly, Giving a beginning to any schemes that are likely to be beneficial to the world after we are gone ;—or at least so bearing our testimony to the value of a good life, that our friends and others who witness our departure, may remember our testimony,—and, so far as our exertions can go, may be influenced by it during their future conduct.

These general classifications may include under each of them one or two distinct particulars, which shall be noticed in their place.

SECTION I.

I.

ARRANGING OUR AFFAIRS.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 1 *Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die.*

THE first duty of the Dying, according to the preceding arrangement, is the setting in order any thing in their worldly affairs that may have gone into derangement, or that may still be put into a better condition.

There are many people who entertain the very false and ruinous idea, that, as religious men, they have a duty of far more importance to be performed, even during their years of health, than that of caring much about the prosperous condition of the circumstances in which they are placed in this world ;—and there are also many who, when their minds are oppressed by the near prospect of their departure from life, think all attention to such matters beneath their regard,—or who even fancy that they should be doing a thing displeasing to God, by devoting any part of their attention to the due ordering of their worldly affairs,—in so far even as the arrangement of these affairs still depends upon themselves.

Wherever such ideas are entertained, there is evidence that the person who entertains them is

under the influence of very erroneous views respecting the great relations in which, as an inhabitant of this world, he is placed, and respecting the duty which is incumbent on him, in consequence of these relations ;—and, accordingly, when God saw fit to announce to Hezekiah, that his days were numbered and must speedily be completed, the command given to the prophet, was to announce to the king the will of God, that he should “set his house in order.”

Indeed, it is a miserable thing for a man to depart from life, with evidence to himself, and to all who witness his departure, or who take notice of it, that the trust committed to him by Divine Providence in this world has not prospered in his hand. At all times it is pleasant, and indicative to us of good, to feel that the little department of society with which we have been connected, or the sphere of duty, however obscure or contracted, which we have been stationed to occupy, is prospering, under our endeavours, to guide its affairs discreetly ;—and most of all, it is pleasant to be satisfied, at the conclusion of our lives, that in so far as this world at least is concerned, we have no evidence in our own bad conduct, or in the ruinous state of our circumstances, that the trust committed to us has been left without a blessing from the hand of Providence.

Every man, indeed, cannot expect to have this token of approbation at the time of his departure ;—nor, if he has done his duty with punctuality and good conscience, is he called to be sorrowful or depressed in mind, if, notwithstanding all his labour and care, his worldly circumstances are not such as he wished, and had sedulously laboured to make them. For God tries the hearts and the faith of his creatures by a wonderful variety of

events,—and as there are all diversities in the states of body and of mind in which different individuals depart from life, so also are there in those circumstances of their lot amidst which the call to them is made.

1. Our station in life, however, with all the duties which belong to it, constitutes in a peculiar sense that *trust* with which our Creator has honoured us in this world ;—and as, during our years of activity and of health, it should be the first endeavour of every good and upright man to guide his affairs with prudence, and to conduct his labours to a successful issue,—so, even during the last portions of life, it is his duty, in so far as health of body and of mind permits, still to attempt to remedy any errors he may have committed in the conduct of his affairs, and to give them such an arrangement or direction as may be likely to lead them to a prosperous issue. .

And this ought to be *conscientiously* done,—because, as has been already said, life is to every man a *trust*,—or the situation which he occupies in life, with all its duties, be they small or great, is a most important part of *the talent* committed to him, by that Divine Providence which called him into existence,—which arranged all the circumstances that characterize his station,—and to which he is finally accountable for his good or bad conduct of the advantages that have been conferred on him,—and every conscientious and wise man, therefore, will be anxious so to manage his affairs in this world, that having thus shown himself to be “faithful over a few things, he may hereafter be made the ruler over many things.”

2. It ought also to be especially kept in mind by those who think little of the trust committed to them individually in this life, that no station can

be considered as unimportant in the scheme of Divine Providence,—a small derangement may in this, as in other things, be followed by consequences of the utmost moment ;—and, indeed, so intimately interwoven are all the portions of our conduct, that he who does well in one particular, commonly sees the good effects of his well-doing extending to other things of which he had not thought,—and he, in like manner, who fails in one part of the trust committed to him, as certainly is made sensible, by the widening influence of his errors, that he is doomed to become the occasion of far greater disasters, both to himself and to others, than he had ventured to anticipate.

In the same manner, the duties of an obscure sphere in life often produce most important results, upon arrangements of apparently far greater magnitude ;—and, on all these accounts, it is of the greatest importance to every man to be made aware, that however obscure or limited, in his estimation, his peculiar station in life may be, it may have relations to other departments of the divine scheme, which may render it, by these connexions, of the very greatest moment.

3. In short, we are all Subjects of the kingdom of God, or have a part in those infinitely good and wise arrangements by means of which he is conducting the affairs of his dominions to their ultimate purpose ;—and our duty, as good and true Subjects, is to think not so much of what seems to us to be the amount of our trust, as of the manner in which we may execute our part with the most perfect success ;—for this is what constitutes us individually *good Subjects*,—and we may be certain, that we are incapable of judging whether our place in life be ultimately, and in relation

to the vast scheme of things, important or otherwise.

- From all these considerations, then, it is evident, that a most momentous part of the trust committed to us, as Servants of God, during life, is the due management of the worldly circumstances in which Divine Providence has seen fit to station us ;—and a becoming and necessary duty to be performed even by those who are about to leave this world, is so to busy themselves in correcting what has been amiss in the management of their affairs, or in giving a new and better direction to existing circumstances, that, even during their last hours, that they may give evidence, that they have not altogether been unworthy of a higher trust, in a greater world, by having been negligent or unscientific Servants in that which they are leaving.

It is, however, impossible on this head to give more particular directions, because the situations of mankind are marked by infinite varieties ;—and every person, therefore, must judge for himself what is the duty in this respect, which is peculiarly required of him, or which he can execute with the greatest probability of success.

II.

MAKING A TESTAMENT.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 1. *Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die.*

UNDER the general title of setting our house in

order, may be considered, in the second place, the making a testament.

This, indeed, is a duty which is best done while we are in health ;—because, in the first place, it can then be done with most mature consideration, and with a regard to all the circumstances, that, in so important a transaction, ought to enter into our view. When once done, it may afterwards receive such alterations or amendments as the progress of our affairs may render necessary.

In the second place, an important reason for making a will while we are in health, may be derived from the beneficial effect which the performance of so solemn an act is likely to have upon our own minds. It has been beautifully said, that “the having a will ready made always by one, like our tomb in the corner of a field, is a constant memorial ;—and the altering and revising it, when circumstances change, while it is right and proper in itself, at the same time renews the useful impression.” “Perhaps” (it has been added no less beautifully) “there are few moments of life when men are more loosened from the world, than at the moment of subscribing a testament. The soul, amidst strong attachments to the earth, needs such loosening, that it may more easily and willingly return unto its rest. The young acorn, enclosed in a husk, and adhering to the stem, resists the scorching of the sun, and the shaking of the wind,—but it is gradually ripened by the sun, and loosened by the wind, till it be ready to drop into the earth, that it may rise again, an oak of the future forest. By executing a will, attachment to worldly things is shaken.” “I have determined whose all these things shall be ; but what is my portion ? My heart and strength fail,—but God is

the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

A third reason for making a will while we are in health, is founded on the consideration, that the law of the land requires, in order to give validity to such a deed, sufficient evidence of health and strength after it has been made,—or, at least, of time sufficient for due deliberation;—and no man can be certain, if he defers the performance of this work to a death-bed, that he shall be in a condition to comply with these requisitions.

Still, many of those who see death evidently approaching are in a condition to make a will, to which the law of the land will give effect;—and the consideration of the many great and long-continued evils which may result from deferring or altogether neglecting this duty, ought to weigh with all such persons in leading them to an instant discharge of it, while its performance is yet in their power.

Now, in order that a will may be properly made, the three following things ought to characterize it:

In the first place, it ought to be constructed according to the strictest and most binding legal forms; so that there may be no possibility of its provisions being evaded and quarrels generated, by any supposition, on the part of survivors, that it has not been executed in a strictly legal form.

In the second place, the person making the testament ought to divest his mind of any unbecoming partialities which, during any previous periods of his life, he may have been inclined to entertain or to act upon. He ought to consider himself as a person about to appear before the Searcher of hearts,—and, so far as human infirmity permits,

he ought, with this impression, to act as if he were already in the presence of him to whom "all hearts are open, all desires known," and who cannot look upon sin or injustice of any kind but with abhorrence.

In the third place, all prudent and becoming *circumstances* ought to be taken into consideration,—so that the testament may bear evidence of its having proceeded from a person who not only was actuated by a sense of justice, and a feeling of good intention, but who retained the *prudence* and just discernment of mind which enabled him to do this important act in the most judicious and effective manner. For this purpose, the advice of a discreet friend may be of use ;—but, at any rate, the person who declines to seek such aid, ought to be certain that he has in his view all the particulars which ought to be attended to in an act on which so many opinions are likely to be passed, and from which such important consequences to the peace of his friends are likely to result.

It is a miserable thing for a man to think that, by neglecting any of these precautions, he may be giving occasion to wrath, and contention, and a breaking down of all brotherly kindness, after he is gone, among those who were his intimate and nearly-related friends while he lived,—and that his bad conduct is thus perpetuating its effects, after he himself has ceased to take an active part in any of the things that are done upon the earth.

The man, on the contrary, who is conscious that he has paid a becoming attention to all these circumstances, has also the pleasing thought, that he has done a deed, the good effects of which will be felt after he has ceased to exist among men,—or that, in so far as his conduct has effect,

good agreement will be cherished, and the influence of the most unbecoming of all contentions counteracted.

By so conducting himself he also procures for his own character a good report after he is gone ;—and by the justice and impartiality, and thorough discretion of his conduct, he does honour to the cause of Christ,—if he has professed himself an adherent of that cause, and wished to die as one who had acted under the influence of its kind, and pure, and honourable spirit.

“A good testament, it has been said, is one of the rarest of all things ;”—and every good man ought therefore, to be careful that this last act of his connexion with this world should be done in the most exemplary and effective manner.

SECTION II.

I.

RECONCILIATION.

MATTHEW xviii. 21. *Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?—Jesus saith, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven.*

THE second thing which was mentioned under this general classification as proper to be done by the dying, is the forgiveness of injuries, or doing

all that we can to depart from life in a spirit of good-will to every human being.

There is scarcely any man so happily situated as not to have some ground of enmity or contention with some other human being ;—and during health and prosperity we all find many reasons which seem to us sufficient grounds for refusing to be reconciled.

There are in particular three considerations which are apt to suggest themselves as grounds for maintaining a spirit of hostility.

In the first place, we endeavour to persuade ourselves that the wrong has been done, originally, not by us, but by the person or persons against whom we have taken a grudge ;—and, therefore, we conclude that there is no reason why we should be the *first* to make advances towards a spirit of conciliation.

In the second place, we think that having suffered *wrong*, there would be pusillanimity in overlooking it, or even in not showing resentment and feelings of ill-will against those who have offended us.

In the last place, we argue that human life would not be secure, or comfortable, unless vengeance were taken for injuries that have been committed ; or unless we showed, by the keenness of our resentment, that the offences of our fellow-men have generated in us a spirit of hostility.

But, with respect to all these reasons, there are two fallacies which may be detected lying at the foundation of them. In the first place, there is, in every such case of cherished enmity, a great mixture of human *pride*, and foolish misapprehension respecting what constitutes the true dignity and excellence of conduct ;—and, in the second place, most of these reasonings imply a belief, on our

part, that there are circumstances in our situation, as active and moral agents, which render it proper and even *useful* that we should cherish the enmity which offences have awakened.

Now, whatever force we may see in such considerations during health, all such imagined force ought to disappear when we have the prospect of bidding farewell to life ;—for that, in the first place, is a time when all the *high thoughts* of our hearts ought to be broken down, and when the only frame of mind which is becoming or proper in us to cherish, is that of profound humility before God, and a spirit of forbearance and even of good-will to every partaker of that human nature which we are about to put off.

There can also be no longer any reason, when we are about to leave this world, for supposing, that the maintenance of a spirit of enmity is justified by a regard to our individual *security* or *useful conduct* in life ;—and, on all these accounts, there is evident propriety, independent of all positive injunction or future prospects, in not only freeing our minds from all feelings of resentment, but in doing every thing we can to depart from life in a spirit of reconciliation and of good-will.

But to enforce these considerations of propriety, it ought to be recollected, that we have a *positive* commandment upon this subject ;—and that, as the whole spirit of the Christian institution recommends forgiveness, we have been taught by our Lord, in our daily prayer, to ask pardon of our offences, “ as we forgive those who have transgressed against us.” The expectation of *forgiveness* is, at the moment of death, the most anxious wish that can press upon the human heart ;—and, in this prayer, we are taught to believe, that we have an earnest of such forgiveness only in so far

as we have succeeded in forgiving all those with whom we have had any ground of quarrel.

Our future prospects, also, give a sanction to this duty ;—for we are not only about to appear before God, but expect to be united with the great Company, among whom there is only peace and a happy rivalry in all good offices to the family of the Creator ;—and we cannot be altogether fit for such society, till we are conscious of having divested ourselves of all feelings of enmity to every partaker of that human nature, from our participation in the errors and the sorrows of which we are now hoping to depart.

The rule and the propriety of the thing being thus beyond controversy, the three following directions seem to comprise what is requisite to be done by us for fulfilling this duty :—

In the first place, if it be in our power to make a *formal agreement* with our offending brother, we should anxiously embrace any such opportunity, and even earnestly solicit it.

But, in the second place, there may be cases, and perhaps they are the most numerous, in which, without any formal quarrel having taken place, there have been only secret and occasional feelings of jealousy or ill-will ;—and with respect to such disagreements, no formal reconciliation being necessary, or perhaps proper, our spirit of good-will may be best displayed by a zealous performance of such actions as may show the individual with whom we have been at variance, that our hearts are now in all respects reconciled to him.

In the last place, where neither of the former methods of reconciliation is in our power, we should endeavour to divest our own spirits of all feelings of irritation or of hostile remembrance,—and to cherish such a frame of mind as may be

an evidence to ourselves, that the peace of God has descended upon our hearts, and that we are about to leave this world, not only without one feeling of enmity to any human being, but in such a state of mind, as is an earnest to us, that we are about to enter into the universal communion of the Just made perfect.

II.

RESTITUTION.

LUKE xix. 8. *If I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.*

UNDER the head of reconciliation may also be considered the no less imperious duty of restitution of whatever has been unjustly taken, or reparation of wrongs that have been committed.

Those who hold public situations, or who have had transactions with many persons, are apt, in the course of life, to have been guilty of actions which especially demand this species of reparation;—and happy is the man who, after having filled important public trusts, or having been engaged in many transactions of various kinds, and with many individuals, can yet say, when about to depart from life, that he has in no instance appropriated to himself that which did not belong to him, or done the slightest act of injustice to any of his fellow-men. The following is a beautiful instance of this integrity of conduct, and of the reward that attended it:

"Samuel said unto all Israel,—I am now old and grey-headed, and I have walked before you from my childhood until this day. Behold here I am,—witness against me before the Lord, and before his Anointed. Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." And they said, "Thou hast not defrauded us nor oppressed us,—neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." And he said unto them, "The Lord is witness against you, and his Anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand." And they answered, "He is witness."

Although such dangers, however, are chiefly incurred by those in high rank, or who have lived amidst much active business, it may happen that an individual in the most private sphere of life, may be conscious that he has on some occasion done wrong to some other individual, or is in possession of advantages which do not, in strict justice, belong to himself,—or that there is some action or other which he ought now to perform, in order to depart from life with the conviction, that he has rendered unto all their due, or, at least, done what he could to repair any previous wrong of which he may have been guilty.

Now, restitution or reparation, in such circumstances, is a duty of indispensable obligation,—and even all attempts at reconciliation are nugatory and fallacious, till this retributive act of justice has been performed;—and if, therefore, there be any individual from whom we have by any means taken that which did not belong to us, or whose character, or virtue, or comfort, or worldly circumstances, we have in any way injured, we

have no reason to congratulate ourselves on having done all that we can to leave this world under the most favourable circumstances, till we have zealously and effectively set ourselves to repair, to the utmost of our power, and at any expense of labour or of humiliation, the evil we have committed.

SECTION III.

I.

USEFUL PLANS.

REVELATION xiv. 13. *Their works do follow them.*

THE last general title under which we proposed to consider the actions proper to be done by the dying, was that of giving a beginning to such schemes as may be useful to the world after we are gone,—or, at least, so bearing our testimony to the value of a good life, that those who witness our departure may be confirmed in their faith, and induced to lead pious and exemplary lives.

Most men have it in their power to do a much greater quantity of good to their fellow-creatures than they actually perform, during their years of health and strength. But the bustle and thoughtlessness of active life, disincline the generality of men for such actions, or prevent them for being aware, that their performance is actually in their

power. Even the humblest individual, however, when he is intent on doing good, can often find abundant means of accomplishing his wishes ;—and it is pleasing to see to what an extent the very scantiest means can go, when they are thus seconded and employed by a zealous spirit.

The termination of life, however, ought to recall every man to a sense of the opportunities which during health he may have neglected ;—and those, especially, who hold a prominent place in life, or who, from their rank and influence, are likely to make a powerful impression on those around them, ought carefully to consider, what they can now do, that the welfare of the world may be promoted after they have left it,—or that the interests of piety and virtue may be advanced among men.

Schemes tending directly to the *temporal good* of mankind ought not to be overlooked ;—for the *kingdom* of God is advanced by every thing that betters the condition of his creatures, or that even beautifies the face of that world in which existence has been assigned us ;—and there are many individuals of rank and influence, to whose habits and opportunities the promotion of such schemes is peculiarly appropriate. Such persons leave a valuable legacy to the world, and have an earnest, in their endeavours to be useful, that they shall not be considered as altogether unfitted for a higher trust in that greater state on which they are about to enter.

The interests of *piety* and *virtue*, however, are fitted especially to press themselves on the notice of the dying, who feel how much their own welfare or failure in life has been owing to the influence or to the absence of those qualities in themselves ;—and it is a becoming act, on the part of

the dying, to busy themselves in giving a commencement to any plans, by the progress of which these qualities may be promoted.

It is only necessary to observe further, under this head, that though these recommendations are particularly applicable to those who have wealth or influence, there are few so humble in their sphere as to be altogether precluded from their application. But the particular manner in which this kind of good deeds is to be done, must in every case be left to the discretion of those who are in a condition to perform them.

Being instrumental in establishing an industrious and virtuous family in the world, or providing for the maintenance and education of a well-disposed child, may often be giving a beginning to a scheme of usefulness which shall attend its influence much farther than any human imagination was capable of foreseeing.

II.

PARTING ADVICES.

GENESIS xviii. 19. *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.*

THE second article of duty noticed under the general title of this section, was that of bearing testimony to the value of a good life, and to the truth of the grand principles of religious belief.

The last words of those who have been well

known to us in life are seldom forgotten or entirely useless to survivors ;—and if they have been the last words of persons eminent for their rank or influence, or for any other excellence, they are likely to make a peculiarly profound impression on the minds of those who have heard them.

The Scriptures, accordingly, which are intended to teach us not only how to live but to die, are filled with many instructive passages of this kind ;—the Author, however, cannot illustrate his ideas upon this subject better, than by quoting the following passages from the works of a writer,* who was long an exemplary father in Christ, to the flock over which he presided, and whose writings, characterized at all times by a peculiar and rich eloquence, are never so beautiful as when they present to us the incidental but highly-finished pictures with which they abound, of a life, whether in an elevated or in an humble sphere, “devoted to godliness :”—

“Last words, and counsels, and prayers,” (says this excellent writer,) “affect the heart: when proceeding from an eminent benefactor to mankind, they instruct and edify, from age to age. ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,’ were the last words of Jesus :—they are remembered and pondered by his friends in all their generations :—with his words they ascend to his Father and their Father,—to his God and their God.”

“The Apostle Paul’s reflection on ‘the course he had finished, and his crown laid up,’ is an interesting view of a Christian’s hope in death, and of the true foundation of that hope.”

“Parting advices pass from the heart to the

* Dr. Charteris.

heart,—and Peter's counsels glow with peculiar warmth and tenderness,—‘Knowing that shortly I must put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me; moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.’”

“The last blessings of the patriarchs are recorded, not only as prophecies, but as expressions of devout affection, and of their faith in the efficacy of prayer. Though *we* cannot reach the fame and the influence of Apostles and Prophets, yet it seldom falls to the lot of a Christian to die unlamented;—there are, for the most part, some to whom his memory is dear, and by whom his last words will be affectionately remembered.”

—“They who have wealth must bestow the attention necessary to dispose of it aright, but still greater attention is due to piety;—they who have no wealth, can bestow their whole attention on spiritual concerns. With regard to these, three things should be aimed at: first, to learn an example of resignation and faith; secondly, to give suitable parting advices; thirdly, to make intercessions with God. There are instances, both among the rich and the poor, of exemplary attention to these things. I have seen an account of the death-bed of one whose nobility may recommend her pattern to the great, and perhaps remind them, that piety alone ennobles in a dying hour.” “She expressed gratitude, submission, and love to her Creator,—the greatest confidence in the merits of her Redeemer, and in their efficacy for her salvation,—and the strongest assurance that her faith, her attachment to her duty, her charity to the world, her love and attention to the poor, and the truth and innocence of her heart, were approved of by God.” After addressing the several members

of her family, she comforted them all with those comforts wherewith she herself was comforted of God. "I have no anxiety about you or myself,—I lived happy, and I die contented ;—nor let this surprise you,—it is the genuine effect of the impression I have constantly preserved on my soul, of the goodness and omnipresence of God. This not only supports me, it cheers me, it animates me with the most lively hope for myself and for you. Let this, therefore, convince you of the power of true religion. Cultivate piety. It will smooth your passage through life, and make your departure pleasant as mine is."

"When a mother is taken from young children, and from the husband of her youth, they stand in need of comfort,—and the highest comfort flows from the remembrance of her piety and virtue. If, while the Mourner indulges his sorrow by reviewing the history of a life dear as his own, the Christian temper appears throughout sustained and adorned ;—if the days of her youth were marked by unwearied attention to aged parents ;—if the duties of every future relation were studied and fulfilled ;—if a principle of obedience to God, cherished by devotion, pervaded her conduct ;—if she attended to worldly cares but with no anxious solicitude, and welcomed human comforts with no high emotion, and saw them retire without much regret, still preferring the humblest duties to the most favourite enjoyments ;—if no unkindness ever harboured in her breast, and no angry passion ever ruffled it, and that perfection was almost attained which offends not in word ;—if, in every trial, the power of religion prevailed ;—and if, in the last trial, while under a disease at which nature shrinks, and which baffled all the powers of medicine, she could possess her soul in patience ;—

if the remembrance of a well spent life yielded consolation to her parting spirit ;—if she left to her children the efficacy of all her prayers, and the memory of all her virtues, a sacred legacy ;—if thus, with the remembrance of a departed friend, the remembrance of exalted virtue mingles, the Mourners hear as it were a voice behind them, ‘ This is the way, walk ye in it ;’—a voice from on high, ‘ Come up hither.’ ”

“ The mind does not always decay with the body ;—the inward man is often renewed and strengthened, as the outward man decays. A *peculiar energy* is exerted at times by the parting spirit ; and I have heard, from a death-bed, the tongue of the stammerer speak plain, and the lips of the unlearned utter excellent things ;—solemn charges from a dying mother to her daughters, in the humblest sphere of life,—charges to be honest, and to work for their bread,—to be content, and to go into none of the ways of pride,—to be modest and humble,—to be God’s children,—and to God she commended them in prayer. This was a poor widow’s legacy to her children ; it was a legacy of value ; for it is no delusion, that the seed of the godly are heirs of promise, that the efficacy of prayer descends, and that the children of the righteous are in circumstances far more favourable to virtue than the children of the wicked.”

“ Some parents, aware of uncertainty as to the time and manner of their death, have sealed up written counsels to be opened after their decease by their children ; and some have, in the same way, made a last address to their friends ;—this method has all the advantages formerly mentioned, of making a testament while in health,—and it has the advantage of serving as a sacred deposit, to be recurred to at times, after the traces left by

a last interview on the imagination and heart are passed away."

"Some spiritual fathers have by their writings perpetuated their instructions. A faithful pastor, speaking for the last time, and speaking from the tomb, is heard with serious, awful attention."

"'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained praise.' With words of comfort they have at times assuaged the grief of parents, have looked forward to the resurrection of the body with a lively faith, have anticipated communion with angels and saints, and in the full assurance of walking with Jesus in white raiment, with palms in their hands, and a new song in their mouths, and everlasting joy on their heads, have passed in patience through great tribulation. From their own experience of comfort in death, they have earnestly recommended religion,—and this was *their legacy* to surviving friends. By this means parents who minded religion too little have been awakened to serious thought,—believing parents have had their faith increased,—and the young have been led to early piety."

To these interesting remarks, the Author has but one concluding observation to add.

Even when the tongue can no longer utter words of faith, or express recommendations to duty,—when the last struggle is about to commence,—and a final farewell to be taken of every thing on earth, something may occasionally still be done by those whose minds are anxious to be useful, for the future edification and comfort of those who witness their departure;—and a good man may, even at that awful moment, show himself to be under the influence of that divine love to men, which is the most excellent of all gifts, and the surest pledge of his preparation for the "commu-

nion of the Just made perfect." In the manner in which he prepares himself for the last struggle, he may evince the desire which he feels that he may pass through it so as to leave a good impression on the minds of his friends ;—even "a composed look," when nothing else can be expressed, may often convey a meaning which can neither be misunderstood nor forgotten ;—and as charity is the greatest of all gifts, a good man cannot close his life better than by an act of that grace, which will accompany his spirit into eternity. Amen.

PART FOURTH.

PROSPECTIVE VIEWS.

- 1 CORINTHIANS ii. 9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."
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SECTION I.

- 1 JOHN iii. 2. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*
1 CORINTHIANS xv. 53. *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

THE transcendently grand and interesting doctrine of "Everlasting Life," is essential to Christianity,—not merely, because it forms the subject of many explicit declarations throughout the books of the New Testament,—but, chiefly, because it is embodied in all the events which made up the mortal history of him who came into this world as the "Messenger of our reconciliation with God,"—"who purchased peace for us by the blood of his cross,"—"who rose from the dead as the first-fruits of them who sleep,"—who at last went visibly from "the Mount of Olives" to the glory which the Fa-

ther had prepared for him,—and who is thus set forth as “the Forerunner of his people” into the invisible scenes of the eternal world,—that, by imitating his course of duty and of endurance, they also may finally be exalted with him, and may “see him as he is.”

It is, thus, impossible for any Christian to meditate on any of the great events of his Saviour's life,—and these events are supposed to form the favourite subjects of thought to all Christian hearts,—without having the blessed hope of “Immortality” brought home to his mind in the most affecting of all forms ;—and we may hence perceive a *new application* of the beautiful words used by the disciple, whom Jesus questioned respecting the sincerity of his attachment, “Lord, to whom else can we go? thou not only hast the *words* of eternal life,” but by the grand and truly instructive events of thy personal history, life and immortality have been brought to light, and the face of this our world seems to be irradiated by a new effulgence, let down from the splendours of that eternal day, with the ineffable glories of which the short-lived and ever-changing events of time are yet in essential and indissoluble connexion.

While however, “the blessed hope of everlasting life has thus been set before us by the Gospel,” it is also true, that when we attempt to extend our view to those future conditions of being on which we have reason to believe that we are hereafter to enter,—when we endeavour to ascertain what are to be the enjoyments or occupations which are there to be the recompense of the good,—or generally, when we try to state to ourselves what is to be the complexion of our future life, we find ourselves precluded from all distinct and satisfactory conceptions on the subject ;—even Christi-

anity, which has made the doctrine itself familiar to the imaginations and hearts of all its disciples, has only spoken of the realities of the eternal world under images borrowed from those terrestrial objects which now surround us ;—and, most assuredly, of all the myriads who have gone from time to the great company of the departed, not one has ever been permitted to “ unfold the secret ” which man is so anxious to know,—or to inform us, by a return into the world which he once occupied and from his own personal experience, what are the actual arrangements and what the unutterable joys of that heavenly kingdom, in the existence of which we yet all profess our unhesitating belief.

Nor is it difficult to discover very satisfactory reasons for this limitation of our view ;—for the truth is, that even though an attempt had been made to convey to us exact information respecting the scenery and the occupations of the invisible world, such information could only have been intelligible to us, in so far as it was conveyed by images borrowed from the arrangements amidst which we are at present placed ;—because all our present ideas are derived from the objects that are discovered to us by our senses, and have an indissoluble relation to them,—and new powers of apprehension would, therefore, have been as necessary as new information to enable us to comprehend any supposed communication respecting objects so essentially different from all with which we have hitherto been familiar. Even supposing such a communication possible, there is great reason to question the good effect which it would have had upon our conduct, as beings who are limited in our exertions to a very definite range, and all whose vigour is demanded for the success-

ful discharge of the task that is thus committed to them ;—at any rate, it is quite evident, that all the most important feelings of our nature would have been changed by such a disclosure of things greater and more inviting than those which now constitute to us the charm of existence ;—and there is, accordingly, most profound and beautiful wisdom in that arrangement of Providence which has limited all our distinct views to the “ things which do appear,”—but which has, at the same time, given to these material objects such a character and expression, that they cannot be contemplated by a devout and considerate mind, without suggesting the belief, that our present situation is only introductory to some grander and more enduring scenes, with which the objects and pursuits of time are, every one of them, in intimate, though to us in invisible, connexion.

Still it is natural, that, believing ourselves to be assuredly destined for some greater and more permanent station in existence, we should occasionally stretch our view into that future state, and endeavour to form to ourselves such ideas respecting its arrangements as we are capable of deriving from the succession of events amidst which we are at present placed,—and there are, accordingly, two plans which have been adopted by mankind with this intention. For, in the first place, the rudest conceptions of the human mind have always disposed mankind to consider their future life, as but a more perfect and uninterrupted enjoyment of those pursuits which now engage their affections ;—and even the least dignified and intellectual of their occupations have thus been transferred by them, in imagination, into those future scenes where they have promised to themselves a full measure of those gratifications, whether of sense or

of activity, which on earth they had learnt to consider as the most valuable objects of desire. On the other hand, those who have been instructed in more spiritual ideas respecting the dignity of human nature, have shown a disposition to sublime their expectations beyond all possible participation of their affections or understandings,—and, resting in the vague idea of *spiritual perfection*, have imagined for themselves and for others a future destination, which can have no effect in awakening any human affection, or in inducing men to look forward to immortality with that blessed triumph which, when properly apprehended, it was meant to inspire.

The former of these modes of thought is, obviously, not worthy of a particular refutation ;—because every person must perceive, upon a moment's reflection, that it is but a vulgar exercise of the imaginative propensities of the human mind, erroneously extending its *present peculiarities* of thought to objects and scenes to which they are not properly applicable ;—while the latter mode of conception, by either presenting nothing that is satisfactory to the understanding, or by teaching us to anticipate an uninterrupted continuance of services which are not fitted to be the constant employment of our nature in any of its states, has, in both of these respects, a tendency to darken our view of the beautiful arrangements of the divine kingdom,—and, indeed, to render the occupations of the future world any thing but an object of affectionate expectation.

Now, though it has been already stated, that we are incapable, from our very nature, as that nature is at present constituted, of forming any *distinct* ideas respecting the actual arrangements of the future life, we are not however precluded from

the power of framing some *general* conclusions, which may be relied on as applicable to the transcendently magnificent character of the combinations respecting which we are venturing to speculate. For the grand principle to be kept in mind upon this subject is, that that portion of the vast dominions of God which is exposed to our view in our present state, has been set before us as a *specimen* of that general order which pervades all the departments of the interminable empire of God ;—and provided, therefore, our conclusions be correctly deduced from what creation now offers to our view, we need not hesitate to adopt these conclusions, as indicating, at least, the *general principles* upon which the arrangements of our future condition also are to be conducted. It is upon these views, that, in the prosecution of this discourse, it is purposed to exhibit some general principles illustrative of the arrangements on which we are hereafter to enter,—principles deduced, it is humbly hoped, from no unwarranted interpretation of “the visible things of God,”—and intended to render a future state more an object of affectionate desire, than, in the minds of the generality of Christians, it is at present observed to be.

We may lay it down, then, as our *first* and leading maxim on this subject, that the change we are to undergo in entering on our future condition, will be much greater than in the common habits of our imaginations we are disposed to represent it to ourselves.

In our usual mode of thinking upon this subject, we merely transfer our present faculties and affections, and, indeed, the very form of our material part, though in some more attenuated or subtile state, into other and purer regions of the universe, which also, however, we consider not as essentially

different from those that at present surround us,—but rather as the very scenery of our present abode, though refined from the imperfections by which matter is characterized, and fitted for being the habitation of our renewed nature, by being invested with a warmer colouring of heavenly glory. In this manner, both the powers which at present characterize our nature, and which give it its distinctive place in existence and its peculiar modes of perception and of thought,—and also the forms and appearances of the material system amidst which that nature is now stationed,—to which it is accommodated in all its qualities and relations,—and from the contemplation of which all its ideas, and thoughts, and feelings are derived,—are transferred by us, in imagination, into some greater and more extensive region, where, however, their present distinctive properties are still supposed to adhere to them, under more perfect, and, according to our common modes of speech, under more spiritual forms;—and the things that are heavenly and imperishable, the scenery of the invisible and eternal world, is thus conceived by us as but the scenery of our present habitation, though freed from every thing that now mars its beauty, and lighted up with the perpetual splendours of a light which flows from the immediate brightness of the throne of God.

In short, when we think of the condition upon which we are hereafter to enter,—of the powers with which we are there to be endowed,—and of the arrangements amidst which these powers are to be exercised,—we shall find, if we reflect upon the operations of our minds while busied with such subjects of study, that all our ideas of things future and eternal, are but transcripts of similar things with which we have already been made fa-

miliar ;—and that, according to this mode of conceiving the arrangements of the universe, the various departments of the boundless dominions of God, and the powers and properties of the beings who inhabit them, are not, strictly speaking, *different* from each other, but only varied in the degrees of perfection with which the *same* qualities are manifested in them, and adapted to the changing condition of beings who are every where essentially the *same*, though endowed, in accommodation to the varying character of the scenes they occupy, with innumerable varieties of comparative perfection.

If, however, we attend more carefully to those operations of intellect which we now perform, and to the powers with which, for the performance of these operations, we have been furnished, we shall be satisfied, that not only is there an exact accommodation between the faculties which now characterize our nature, and the material arrangements amidst which we are at present stationed, but that the whole furniture and riches of our minds have a relation to these arrangements, and are ultimately derived from them ;—insomuch, that not only are all our perceptions of sense referable to the appearances of the universe which present themselves around us,—but even the operations and subjects of our most exalted and intellectual part,—the images of our fancy,—the ideas of our understandings,—the very affections of our hearts,—and every combination and change which these are capable, in our present state, of undergoing,—have a reference to the fundamental perception of those material forms, of which, in every instance, they are but varied modifications ;—so that were our powers of *perception* changed in but a slight degree, the whole apparatus of our understandings

would undergo a corresponding change,—and while external things would assume altogether new and strange appearances corresponding with the alteration which our faculties had undergone, our own intellectual part would seem to have experienced a change almost as great, as if all its essential attributes had been subverted.

And what then must we suppose to be the condition of beings who have not merely undergone a *variation* in their powers,—but who have put off that material organization with which all their previous capacities and modes of thought and of feeling had been connected,—of beings who have entered upon the altogether new and eternal scenes of the invisible kingdom,—and who have, consequently, been furnished with powers suited to the perception and enjoyment of the hitherto unimagined objects that have at last been presented to them? It is only a fallacy of our imaginations, as they are at present constituted, that induces us to conceive a spirit, as but the faint semblance of our present body, though gifted with powers of more extensive movement and of finer perception than it could have enjoyed while encompassed with its mortal tabernacle;—and when we divest our imaginations of this fallacy, and form our opinions respecting our future changes of being, from more correct views of our entire nature, the only conclusion we shall find ourselves warranted to draw from all such views is, that, in leaving our present abode as inhabitants of this earth, we are destined to enter upon arrangements and to become gifted with powers, which, not only in their superiority to all those we have already experienced, but in their essential and characteristic properties, are such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the imagination of man is capable of conceiving.”

All the transformations which we observe taking place among the lower forms of organization with which we are acquainted, favour the idea which has now been suggested ;—the completeness of the change, too, which we undergo at death, in which we seem to be divested of every thing that had characterized our nature during its abode upon earth, leads to the same conclusion ;—and the manifold and powerful reasons we have for believing that the works of God are as *varied* in their character as they are exquisite in their construction, conspire with all other views in inducing us to consider our future state as destined to be not merely an extension or spiritualization of the present, but the gifting of our nature with *new* powers,—new, in the strictest sense of the word,—and the consequent opening up to us of views of the vast and infinitely-varied dominions of God, suited to the completeness of the change which our powers of contemplation and of action have undergone.

But, in the second place, although the views which have now been exhibited authorise us in concluding that our future condition of being will be *different* from the present, in all the powers and in all the circumstances that shall then make part of our lot, we are by no means authorised to infer, from these considerations, that our nature, in the change which it is hereafter to undergo, shall be divested of all relation to the habits it has already acquired, and to the powers by which it is at present characterized ;—in short, our future state, though vastly and indeed essentially *different* from the present, will, we have every reason to believe, be, however, the *result* of it,—or the consequence, according to a series of causes established by Providence, of the peculiar faculties and

habits that have, in its present state, given to it its distinctive character.

In order, however, to make this statement more intelligible, we must elucidate a principle which seems, so far as we can discover, to govern the procedure of Divine Providence, throughout all the works with which the universe is filled. The principle to which allusion has now been made, and the just comprehension of which is infinitely important to a correct understanding of the plans of Providence, is the following;—namely, that though it be true, as we have already endeavoured to prove, that the works and designs of God are not only faultless in execution, but infinitely varied in their manifestations,—it is also true, that there is no chasm or disruption perceptible throughout the immeasurable extent of the divine dominions;—that time and eternity,—things visible and invisible,—our material organization and our intellectual faculties,—all the events that now make up our history as living and active agents, and all the consequences that are to come to us throughout the entire lapse of our immortal existence,—are in intimate and indissoluble connexion;—that the succeeding state of all beings has some relation to that from which they have previously arisen,—and that the wisdom of God, which is infinitely great in all its manifestations, thus combines, in the conduct of its works, the most varied changes of character and constitution, with an unity and continuance of scheme, which leave no point of possible existence unoccupied, nor permits any creature to pass from its original state without undergoing all those consecutive changes which are necessary to complete the perfectly adjusted and full condition of the divine dominions.

Even now, accordingly, while we are still chained by our material part to this earth, we are in

connexion, also, with the higher orders of the intellectual world, by means of our greater and diviner faculties;—we not only feel within us “thoughts that wander through eternity,” but are conscious that we are at all times in intellectual communication with the eternal Fountain of all Mind, and in possible intercourse with such orders of spirits as the Almighty may permit to hold fellowship with man;—and we thus seem to stand as the link by which matter and mind are connected in the universe, and are evidences to ourselves that there is no chasm or disruption throughout the boundless extent of those infinitely varied, and unspeakably glorious works, by which the Almighty has furnished out and beautified his dominions.

Nor is it altogether impossible to understand in what way, amidst so great an alteration of our powers as we have supposed to take place in our future state, that state may yet be essentially affected by our present condition,—and be, indeed, in the strictest sense of the word, the *result* of it,—the result, according to laws established by infinite wisdom, of the peculiar powers with which we are now endowed,—of the habits we have been studious to acquire,—and of the tenor of conduct which we have held through life. For though even the knowledge we have acquired by our present powers must vanish, and, indeed, be altogether without use, amidst arrangements to which conclusions derived from the phenomena of time can have no applicability,—yet the vigour which we have gained in this life, from the exercise of our powers in acquiring such knowledge of the divine works and ways as we are now capable of obtaining, may become the foundation of that higher life,—of those finer and more perfect germs

of being,—of those more varied and comprehensive powers, which are to determine the new character of our immortal part ;—and thus, as in the past portion of our history, our present constitution of body and of mind has been the natural result, according to established laws, of those peculiar circumstances in which Divine Wisdom saw fit to place us, at our first entrance upon sensitive life,—when the germ of existence was but beginning to be unfolded,—and when no eye, previous to experience, could have foreseen to what height of intellectual and sentient capacity these first symptoms of conscious being were yet to be expanded ;—so the whole of our present history, considered as but the opening of a life which is to be unfolded into full maturity amidst the splendours of the immortal kingdom of God, is probably but intended to lay the foundation of changes on which our condition and station in the universe is to depend, when all the preparatory events and arrangements of which these changes have indeed been the consequence,—but which were only important, as introductory to future changes,—have for ever ceased to exist.

And hence we may perceive the meaning of those striking and most instructive phrases so often used in the sacred writings, viz. that God is hereafter “to render to every man according to his works,”—“that what we sow in time we shall reap in eternity,”—and that “there is no secret thing” that has been done by man, not even the most evanescent thought that may have passed through the silence of his breast, “that shall not be made manifest, when God shall render unto every man according to that which he has done in life, whether it has been good, or whether it has been evil ;” —for the truth is, that the minutest, and what seem

to us the most fugitive and imperceptible parts of our modes of thinking and acting have some influence, and often a much greater and more permanent influence than we are aware of, in the formation of what is strictly and properly entitled our individual characters;—but it is, unquestionably, our individual *characters*, in this strict sense of the expression, that are to be the measures of the honour or the shame we are to inherit in our future state;—and, in the infinitely wise and exquisitely adjusted arrangements of Divine Providence, we may rest assured, that there is no part of our habitual mode of acting and thinking so small, or so little worthy of being taken into account, nor any portion of our conduct so lost in the lapse of past time, as not to be made efficacious, according to its quality, in determining the entire complexion of the station we are to hold, when, amidst the novelty and splendour of more glorious manifestations of the divine dominions, the very elements of thought and more mature habits of conduct, that have given to our place and character in existence their final attributes, shall have altogether passed from our view.

We have thus made use of two *general* principles derived from observation of the plans of Providence, in the economy of nature, and in the events of life,—and viewed as intimations of the principles upon which the divine government throughout all worlds is conducted. The first of these principles respects the infinite variety by which the works and ways of Divine Providence are characterized;—and this principle, in connexion with the fact, that our present powers and capacities have a most perfect accommodation to the material arrangements amidst which our course is now run, seems to entitle us to conclude, that our

future condition shall be much more different from the present than our peculiar powers of conception are now capable of representing to us. The second principle of which we have availed ourselves, respects the unbroken continuity and fine gradation of scheme upon which all the works of Divine Wisdom are conducted ;—and from the consideration of this principle we have found reason to conclude, that our future state, though essentially different from the present, will, however, be the *result* of it, according to a series of causes established by infinite wisdom, and beautifully connecting the subsequent condition of all creatures with that which they have previously filled,—so as to leave no chasm or unoccupied condition amidst the boundless multitude of existences by which the empire of the Creator is peopled,—though, at the same time, this connexion is preserved by means too fine to be foreseen or completely apprehended by the shortsighted and feeble powers with which man is gifted in his present state. We have now, in prosecution of the same plan of drawing our conclusions from contemplations of the design according to which Divine Providence seems to have constituted that portion of his works which we now witness, to make use of a *third* principle, which is equally suggested by such contemplations,—and which leads us to conclude, that as the divine operations in the history of all sentient and active creatures are *progressive*, our future condition shall not only be different from the present, and the *result* of it, but shall be characterised by *surpassing glory*.

Into what a magnificent habitation have we been ushered, even during this first stage of our progressive history,—how transcendently glorious is even that outer Court of the grand Temple of the

Universe, of which man has at present been constituted the Priest,—and how nobly does the Author of all good seem to announce to us, by the profusion of rich design that now adorns this Temple, that its higher and more august departments must be characterized by a grandeur, of which our present powers can form no conception! Our present nature too,—feeble and sinful as it is,—has yet been crowned by the bounty of the Creator “with glory and with honour;”—we feel that we are, even in time, but a little lower than those sons of light who for ever minister before the Throne of God,—and we further feel, that powers and sentiments lie folded up within us, which no revolutions of time can fully develop, and which are given to us as earnestings of those higher and novel capacities which are hereafter to bring us into closer fellowship with those Angels of God who excel in strength, and who have always delighted to do his commandments. In short, both the material universe which we now behold, and the rich though unoccupied furniture of our own minds, bear distinct traces of their being but the first developments of some grand design, which in its full disclosure, or rather in its successive manifestations, shall far outstrip all the thoughts and imaginations that have ever entered into the heart of man;—and that, therefore, in the beautiful words of the sacred writer, we are authorised, in conformity with this progressive character of the divine dispensations, towards all sensitive creatures, to anticipate for ourselves such a station amidst the yet unrevealed glories of the universe, and such powers of contemplation and of thought, as the “eye of man has never seen, nor his ear heard, nor his imagination is capable of conceiving.”

It is from this incapacity, however, of forming any satisfactory or distinct ideas respecting the actual arrangements of our future condition, that the prevailing errors of human judgment on this most magnificent and interesting of all subjects have originated. For, feeling our inability to form to ourselves any distinct ideas on this subject, we at once endeavour to put an end to our perplexities, by speaking of our future condition as being, in contrast with the limitations and frailties of the present, a state of perfection ;—and without being careful to define what the term perfection, when applied to such a subject, can be supposed to comprehend, we transfer an epithet which is merely relative to a state far above the weaknesses and limitations of the present life, into an expression of absolute freedom from all limitation, or of the full and final possession of all conceivable excellence. We thus fall into the portentous error of assimilating our future state to that of the Eternal Source of all excellence ; or, if a feeling of devout reverence prevents us from incurring this reproach, we, at least, lose ourselves in vague imaginations, which have no tendency to render a future life an object of rational desire ;—and which, even in their least offensive form, have no title to be considered as fair or satisfactory deductions from those manifestations of the divine principles of government which have been exposed to our view and recommended to our study, by the beautiful and magnificent order of that material universe and of those providential arrangements, amidst which this opening of our immortal history has been so splendidly assigned us.

It is on this account, that I am now to apply myself, with the view of further elucidating our prospects as heirs of immortality, to a correction

of some mistakes which seem to have their origin in this misapplication of the term Perfection, and in the vague and unfounded conceptions to which its use has given occasion.

Although, therefore, we have reason to expect that our future station in the universe shall be one of surpassing glory, and that the powers with which we shall then be gifted, shall bear an exact accommodation to the inconceivable grandeur of the new arrangements amidst which our immortal course is to be run, we have no reason to conclude that our future condition shall be altogether without limitation, or that it shall be perfect, when the word perfection is taken in its most absolute and unqualified acceptation.

The truth is, the word perfection is one of those vague and varying terms which admit more or less into their signification, according to the state of mind of him who employs them, or the particular occasion on which they are used. In its highest and most absolute sense it denotes that condition of being which belongs only to the Deity;—and no man who attends, but for a moment, to his own ideas, can suppose that when he speaks of entering, after this life is ended, upon a state of *perfect* existence, he means to say that his condition in that future life is to be equal or similar to that of the Divine Mind;—that is to say, no man can, for a moment, suppose that in his future state of existence he is to become omniscient or omnipotent, or perfect in that sense of the word, in which not only all defect and infirmity is excluded from the meaning of the term, but in which it expresses the utmost conceivable possession of all excellence, and knowledge, and power.

In a more limited acceptation of the word per-

fection, however, it denotes not a state of absolute but of *comparative* excellence. Thus the Angels are said to be an order of *more perfect* beings than those who now people this earth;—and even using the word with respect to different conditions of the *same species* of creatures, we may say that the future condition of the inhabitants of this world will be a state of perfection compared with that in which they now exist.

This, then, is the only allowable use of the term, when it is applied to that condition of being on which we hope to enter, when our shortlived existence on this earth has been completed. We have no reason to hope, and no good or wise man can, for a moment, presume to hope, that his future state is to be exempt from all limitation, or to be gifted with all power and all knowledge. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe, that our future condition, though very glorious, will still be attended with many essential limitations;—that there will still be much, infinitely much, in the ways and works of God, which will be beyond our view,—that there will still be a boundless field of possible attainment over which we are destined to run; and that our view of the universe, however new or different from that which we now enjoy, will still be a very bounded view, when compared with the entire plan of the divine dominions. In short, we are only entitled to expect that the sins and temptations which now seduce us from duty shall be removed;—that purer aspirations after goodness and knowledge shall occupy our minds;—that greater vigour shall be given to us to run in the way of the commandments of God;—and that our station in the universe, corresponding with this renewed vigour and character of our powers, shall open up to us such views of the works and coun-

sels of God, as shall be fitted at once to exalt our adoration into holier rapture,—and to offer constant motives for progressive attainments in purity and happiness. In this sense, indeed, we shall be perfect, though the Universe and the possible attainments of our spirits may still present a field which may only be gradually opening upon us throughout eternal ages.

Neither have we any reason to suppose, in the second place, that, in the future life, the conditions and powers of all creatures shall be equal. So long, indeed, as we proceed upon a vague idea of perfection as the attribute of that condition, this error naturally results from this supposition ;—for perfection seems to us to fix a boundary or a state of being to which, whoever attains, must in all respects be equal to every other being who has gained the same point ;—and it is hence that minds of limited views have so often been perplexed in endeavouring to satisfy themselves how the justice of God can be reconciled with the assignation of an equal reward to him who has served but “during the twelfth hour, and to him who has borne the burden and heat of the day.”

If, however, we draw conclusions respecting our future condition from what we now observe of the plans of Providence, we shall have our minds opened to very different, and to far more satisfactory views. For every human being, during the present life, has a character of mind *peculiar* to himself,—a station in life which he alone occupies,—duties to discharge which belong to him only of all other creatures,—and a series of experiences or of trials which are accommodated to his powers only, and which mark out for him alone of all other beings the race he has to run. And so infinite is the variety which obtains in these respects,

that of all the beings that have existed, that now exist, or that are ever to be called into existence, no two will ever be found who have either altogether coincided in the character of their minds, or who have run through precisely the same course in the progress of their history.

Now from all this we are warranted to conclude, that the purpose of Divine Providence in this infinite variety of talents, of situations, and of experiences, by which the creatures have been distinguished, is to provide an equally varied order of powers for those greater and future conditions of being by which this present is to be succeeded ;—and that as the plan of Providence, in so far as we can now trace it, is that of combining an infinite variety of powers in the production of a general result,—the same plan, though on a higher scale, will be continued throughout all worlds,—and will, accordingly, be manifested by the united co-operation of the infinite host of creatures, with all their infinitely-varied powers and situations, in the production of those grand results which the perfect wisdom and goodness of the Divine Mind has in view for his dominions.

And thus there remains no obscurity on the plan of Providence in its final allotments of good or of evil to the creatures ;—for every man shall at last receive “ according to that which he has done in life ;”—and as he who has been but a feeble or shortlived servant of his Creator, shall find a place corresponding to his powers, those who have all their days been men of God, and have turned many to righteousness, shall “ shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.”

As little reason have we to conclude, in the third place, that our future condition shall be such

as to preclude all future attainments or progressive honour. So long, indeed, as we dwell upon the undefined sense of the word perfection, to which we have already alluded, this is a necessary conclusion;—for a condition of being which is perfect, in the most absolute sense of that word, as it levels all ranks, or rather raises all ranks to that of the highest, can also receive no additions to its already unbounded excellence. But the plan of Providence, in so far as we observe it, or have reason to conclude respecting its higher manifestations, is that of a *progressive* tendency to still higher measures of excellence and glory;—the powers of all intelligent creatures, accordingly, are gifted with a progressive tendency, suited to this corresponding improvement of the scenes to which they are invited to look forward;—and as, in our present sphere, we are but upon the footstool of God, and seem to form the connecting rank between Matter and Spirit, we have only reason to expect, that our future state shall be such as to afford us more extended views of the dispensations of Providence, and such incitements to still higher attainments, as may carry our nature, in its advancing career, to endless but gradually brightening manifestations of the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God.

Still further, we have no reason to suppose that our future condition is to be one of indolent contemplation, or entirely devoted to the indulgence of those affections of the heart, however elevated or delightful in their occasional exercise, which prompt to expressions of devout adoration. Such a state of existence would not only be unsuitable to the condition of man even in the present life, but would be positively degrading to him, if continued as his *only* or *chief* occupation through any

considerable portion of his history. And if we look at the plan according to which the Almighty is obviously carrying on the interests of his dominions, we shall perceive that *active exertion* on the part of his creatures is the mean which he employs for the promotion of his designs ;—that every intelligent being, accordingly, has a sphere of duty which he is appointed to fill,—a series of services which he is called to pay,—a trust more or less extensive and important, by his wise or unwise management of which he contributes his share either to the well-being or to the deterioration of that portion of the kingdom of God to which his influence extends. It is, accordingly, upon these views, that the whole language of the New Testament is founded ;—and in particular, that in the parable of the talents, in which our Saviour has so beautifully described the principles according to which final retribution shall be bestowed upon every man, he has instructed us, that he who had received ten talents, and had wisely occupied them, was made the ruler over ten cities ;—that he who failed to improve his Lord's treasure, was deprived ultimately even of that which he had ;—and that the sentence announcing their new destiny to those who had done well, was in these words, " Well done good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you rulers over many things,—enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

It is not, therefore, a state of indolent contemplation, or a continued exercise of any affections of the heart, however elevated or delightful, for which we are entitled to look as the condition that is to be assigned us when the years of our earthly endurance have been completed,—but a *trust* greater than that which we have held on earth,—

a subject of management more glorious and extensive,—better means of influencing the happiness of other living and progressive beings, and of carrying forward the great and interminable interests of the kingdom of God. And, accordingly, we may now consider ourselves as entitled to conclude, in the last place, that the condition of being for which we are entitled to look hereafter, is not to be a state of *solitary* and secluded existence, but of co-operation with other beings placed in similar circumstances with ourselves,—and interested in the promotion of the same great designs. Indeed, we cannot conceive a state of happiness, without admitting into our conception of it, that of a communion of minds;—for continued solitude is one of the most oppressive of all states to our nature in its present condition,—and some of the purest as well as most delightful of the enjoyments which we are capable of tasting, are those which flow from an unrestrained participation in the kind affections, or generous wishes, or beneficent designs of our fellow-men. The language of Scripture, accordingly, every where speaks of the state of the blessed under images which present it to our minds as a *community*,—as the General Assembly of the Just made perfect,—as a City whose Builder and Maker is God,—as the many mansions of our Father's House,—and as a Union of all those who have followed the Redeemer upon earth, in his heavenly kingdom, as the triumphant Captain of their salvation,—and, consequently, as their final Union with all who, like themselves, have been gathered from all the countries and from all the ages of time, to be partakers with Christ of that glory with which he is now invested. It is hence also that Charity is described as so pre-eminently important and so eternally enduring;—and that

while faith shall be lost in vision, and hope in fruition, it is said of charity that it shall never fail;—but, on the contrary, that when all temporal distinctions by which the creatures have been separated from each other have passed away, the principle of love to each other and to the whole intelligent family of God, shall only gain new vigour, and be the bond of union among all creatures through everlasting ages.

Such seem to be the *general* views which ought to regulate our expectations of that future life for which we all believe ourselves to be now preparing,—and, of the principles that are to pervade which, what we now observe of the Divine dispensations has been exhibited to us as a specimen. These principles, we have said, lead us to expect a state of being *different*, far more different from the present than, in our familiar modes of thinking, we are disposed to expect;—a state, however, which though thus in all its aspects and constitution different from the present, shall still so far be the *result* of it, as to exhibit the consequences, according to a fixed order of events, of all that we have done and thought in time,—a state, however, which shall be much more glorious than the present, and where the progressive tendency of the Divine dispensations shall be manifested not merely in the extended scenes that shall then be opened up to us, but in the very attributes of the nature with which we ourselves shall be endowed. Still, the principles we have elucidated only teach us to look for a condition of existence which shall be subject to many essential limitations, both in the field of our view over the wonders of the universe, and in the powers of contemplation or of exertion with which our own nature shall be gifted;—a condition in which the limitations shall be as infi-

nite as have been the countless varieties of power and of good conduct that have diversified the characters of the rational beings who have lived in time ;—but in which even those who shall be honoured with the highest distinctions shall still have a progressive view of farther advances, to the height and the constantly-increasing glory of which no limitation can be assigned. The same general considerations authorise us, in the last place to expect not a state of indolent contemplation but of active exertion, and of important management and trust;—a station in which new and more extensive powers shall be conferred on us, of influencing the destiny of other portions of the creatures of God, and of promoting the best interests of the Divine dominions,—a condition, finally, in which the communion of the vast host of minds shall still be maintained,—and in which all beings, or at least all who shall be placed within the same wide field of exertion, shall co-operate together, under the direction of Omnipotence, for the eventual evolution of ever-brightening manifestations of the glories of that plan, according to which all the arrangements of the divine dominions are conducted.

These conclusions, it is true, still leave us ignorant of the actual services which shall hereafter be required of us—of the precise field of exertion in which these services shall be paid,—or of the new forms and powers with which, for the accomplishment of these services, we shall be endowed. But they, at the same time, offer to our expectations one of the sublimest views of the arrangements of the Universe, and of the station which we hold amidst its arrangements, which it is possible for us to contemplate,—for they represent to us the vast kingdom of God, of which we see at

present but a part, not only as extending, in many glorious forms, throughout all space, but advancing with still brightening splendours throughout all duration,—and they teach us, that the prospect opened up to us amidst this ever-increasing brightness, is that of constantly advancing “from glory to glory,” and from one measure of strength and of perfection to another throughout ages, to the flight of which our imaginations can assign no limit,—and during the continuance of which, consequently, there is no conceivable height of excellence to which our present feeble and darkened nature may not yet attain.

And surely all this is a prospect which is fitted not merely to awaken vague and unsatisfactory aspirations, but to inspire the warmest anticipations of rational and well-founded desire ;—to give animation, consequently, to all our struggles after greater purity of purpose,—to sustain us in the endurance of all trials,—and to render every trust committed to us in the present life an object of high estimation, as being a specimen and earnest of those greater services in which we are hereafter to engage for the welfare of the Universe. “Seeing then that we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!—looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

SECTION II.

- 1 JOHN iii. 2. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*
- 1 CORINTHIANS xv. 53.—*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

IN the preceding section we have endeavoured to collect from principles suggested by the order of the divine works and dispensations, as we now observe them, the general characteristics of that future state which we have been taught to expect, and in the final realization of which, in our individual cases, we are all presumed to believe.

These principles, pervading the works of nature and the courses of the Divine dispensations, seemed to authorise us in believing that our future condition will be, in its essential characteristics, *different* from that which we now enjoy;—so different, indeed, that our most familiar habits of thought, which only transfer our present nature, in a more refined or spiritual form, into some similar world, though more perfect than the present, are probably founded in error. We seemed entitled, at the same time, to conclude, from other views of the arrangements of Providence, that our future state, though different from the present in its most obvious and essential features, will yet be the *result* of it;—insomuch, that we shall enter upon our future condition with advantage or otherwise, according to the vigour we have acquired by a due and persevering use of the faculties and opportunities which we at present enjoy. We seem-

ed ot have grounds for concluding still further, that our future state will not only be *different* from the present and the *result* of it, but vastly superior to any thing we have yet experienced ;—and that both our view of the wonders of the Universe, and our powers of contemplating and enjoying them, will be such as “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the imagination of man is capable of conceiving.”

At the same time, we took an opportunity of correcting certain errors which have made their way into our most familiar modes of thinking and speaking upon this subject ;—and, especially, those errors which originate in a vague and inconsiderate use of the word perfection, so common in all our discourses relative to future and invisible objects. We considered ourselves, therefore, as entitled to conclude, that our future condition, though vastly superior, in *splendour* and *extent of view*, and in *duration*, to the present, will, however, not be exempt from many limitations ;—that neither will the condition of all intelligent beings be equal in that state ;—that even to those who shall enter on it with the highest advantages, it will still present only the prospect of greater progress which may still be made, and of more interminable wonders that may yet be manifested ;—and, finally, that, instead of being a condition solely of devout meditation, or of ecstatic rapture, or of a secluded indulgence of any other sources of delight, it will, on the contrary, be but our elevation to a greater and more active *trust* than that which we have held amidst the arrangements of time ;—and that all beings who are placed in the same sphere of existence, at least, will be made to co-operate for the welfare of the whole, and will find

their happiness in the active and social indulgence of this co-operation.

Now, in these views of the condition for which we look, there are implied some *principles* respecting the general arrangements of the divine kingdom, which are not commonly understood, but which ought to enter into all our meditations respecting the actual or future dispensations of Divine Providence,—and to a more full development of the meaning and results of which, it is, therefore, our purpose to devote this second Section;—although the principles themselves have been noticed and applied in the preceding portion of this discourse. The importance of the principles themselves, and the momentous consequences which they involve, must be our apology for any appearance of repetition to which this more full consideration of them may give occasion.

They imply, in the first place, that the works of the Divine Mind, or the successive alterations which individual Beings undergo in his kingdom, are as *varied* in their character,—and as incapable of being anticipated by those who are in any preceding stage of their progress,—as they are exquisite in construction,—and pervaded by profound and beneficent wisdom. If, accordingly, we look at the transformations which the inferior animals undergo, we perceive these assuming appearances, and becoming gifted with powers in subsequent periods of their history, which almost constitute them entirely different creatures from what they had been in any of its previous portions;—our own condition in the womb, too, was as different from that which we now exhibit, as are any two of the alterations by which the condition of the lower forms of organization is affected;—and if we should suppose but one of our more perfect senses,—such

as that of hearing or sight, to be wanting, or to be materially changed,—what a different aspect would not merely the face of inanimate nature assume,—but how changed would be the whole furniture and apparatus of our intellectual and sentient frame! In truth, every order of creatures is fitted with perfect nicety of adaptation to the particular system of material arrangements amidst which it is placed,—and forms, so to speak, an essential part of that system;—so that when any order of creatures is destined for a different station in the Universe from that which it at any moment holds, its nature must undergo a change of properties, corresponding with that of its predestined abode,—in order to fit it for becoming a part of that new order of arrangements, of which it is about to constitute an essential portion.

When with these views, derived from the appearances of the forms of organization with which we are at present conversant, we direct our thoughts to the consideration of the varied orders of beings,—the countless and exhaustless forms of existence,—that people the boundless regions of space,—how different does the condition even of the inhabitants of those planets that are most nearly situated with respect to us, seem likely, in all rational probability, to be, from all the circumstances that characterize the state of the inhabitants of this earth!—and how significantly does all this seem to be made known to us, by the very awfulness of the change which we undergo at death,—in which our whole material part is changed in its properties,—and every thing, indeed, that had constituted our connexion with this earth appears to be broken up! The longer, indeed, we permit our minds to dwell amidst such ideas, the more shall we be convinced, that the wisdom of God is as unsearchable

in its proceedings, as it is perfect in the combinations which it is employed in constructing,—and that we are incapable of saying what at any future stage of our immortal history we shall be, because we are incapable of anticipating or even of understanding those wonderful courses of divine wisdom, which the perfect skill of the Supreme Mind is ever evolving for the progressive manifestation of his schemes.

But, in the second place, it is implied in the views which have been exhibited, that in the arrangements, whether actual or possible, of the divine kingdom, there is no *chasm* or interruption, either discernible by us, or which we have reason to believe as actually existing ;—that is to say, that as all the parts of that system of things which is obvious to our eye, and subservient to our uses, are connected together, and pass into each other by fine and sometimes by imperceptible gradations,—so things visible and invisible,—time and eternity,—that portion of the universe which we behold, and that finer and more extensive portion of it which we do not see,—in short, all the events and interests of our present existence, and all the greater events that are to constitute our future history, have a relation to each other, and form, indeed, but parts of the same grand whole, or of one continued and infinitely-extended plan. What we now see, then, in the material world, and those providential events that are at present befalling us, are not something cut off from the other scenes and greater events that are to compose our future history ;—they are but a portion of one grand scheme,—a portion manifested to our view, because suited to the powers with which we are at present endowed, and to the interests and experiences that are now, according to the

plan of Divine Providence, making part of our history;—but that part of the same vast scheme which is now hidden from our view, is equally a part of the actually existing plan with that which we are able at present to contemplate;—and if we could stretch our view over the whole arrangements of creation and courses of Providence, we should perceive, not the disjointed parts of a system, having few and widely-removed connexions with each other, but one continuous and beautifully-adjusted whole,—manifested, in some of its parts, to such orders of creatures as are fitted for the manifestation, and made invisible to them in other and greater portions of it, because they have not powers suited to its contemplation, but are only destined to rise through a progressive history to still finer and more extended views of its entire arrangements. Thus, that portion of the universe, and that succession of events which we now see, and with which we are more immediately connected, is what we call Time,—and that more extended portion of the same scheme, and of the same grand interests, which we do not see, is what we call Eternity;—but Time and Eternity, according to this definition of them, are but the same vast plan, under different manifestations of it;—and any appearance of disruption which may seem to offer itself to our view, only originates in the limited range to which our contemplations can at any moment extend, and in our consequent inability to trace those finely-shaded and divinely-adapted gradations by which, if we could comprehend the whole plan, we should perceive all its parts to be connected with each other.

But, in the third place, as it is thus implied in the conclusions to which we formerly arrived, that the plan of the divine dominions is a *continuous*

scheme, exquisitely adjusted in all its parts ;—so also are we led by the same views to the belief, that the kingdom of God is a *progressive* kingdom, extending not only throughout all the regions of space, but continued in ever-increasing splendours to all the ages of duration. All the material arrangements which at present offer themselves to our view, have in them indications of this tendency,—and there is a corresponding succession of constantly-advancing interests in that series of experiences which compose our present history ;—our own minds and bodies, and all the circumstances in which we are placed, are thus at all times in a condition of change ;—and if we could examine our own history with perfect accuracy, we should perceive, that no two successive moments find us in all respects in the same state. Indeed, if we attend carefully to the character of our own Minds, and to what we can learn of the order of Nature and of Providence, we shall be convinced, that progression continued through everlasting ages, is the law to which all created things are subject ;—that we are incapable of fixing on any attainments or any condition of the Universe, of which we are entitled to say, consistently with all our best ideas, that it is the limit where all change is to terminate ;—and as this course of the Divine dispensations, though seeming occasionally to be interrupted, or made to assume a retrograde appearance, only derives this aspect from circumstances which are, strictly speaking, but incidental to the plan,—we are entitled to conclude, not only that “the kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom, and that his dominion endureth throughout all ages,”—but that that dominion consists in a progressive and ceaselessly-continued tendency of all parts of this kingdom

to still higher manifestations of that wisdom, and goodness, and power, from which they have originally proceeded, and by the constant superintendence and exertion by which they are carried on. We readily admit this progressive exaltation of the plans of God, when we consider them, in our familiar modes of thinking, as extending into higher *regions of space* than that which we at present occupy;—and when we raise our eyes to the brightness of the firmament, we readily admit, that our imaginations can set no bounds to the displays of the wonders of creation which may be extending, in ever-increasing brightness, farther into its unfathomable depths, than any human imagination has ever dared to wander. But the same habits of thinking ought to attend us, also, in our anticipations of those boundless ages which are yet to be evolved;—and our idea of the divine kingdom ought not only to represent it to us, as extending in growing splendours throughout all the regions of space, but as advancing with corresponding brightness and a constantly-manifested tendency to perfection, throughout the interminable ages of duration.

It is implied, in the same general principles, in the fourth place, that as *we* are parts, and important parts, of the entire scheme of things, our present powers and conduct have a relation to all that is hereafter to be evolved in our history;—or that we are to enter upon the future stages of our being with advantage or disadvantage, precisely according to the use we have made of the powers and opportunities with which we are at present gifted. We are not therefore entitled to conclude, as is commonly concluded, that there is one unvaried state of exaltation, to which all those who shall be admitted into the future scenery of the Creator's

dominions are adapted. On the contrary, as every human being has a character and an assemblage of powers appropriated to himself in the present life,—as every man also has a charge committed to him in his present state, which belongs to him only of all the myriads of beings by whom the earth is peopled,—and, in the same manner, as every human being runs through a course of discipline in the present life, which has not any strictly-corresponding course in the history of another individual—and as these varieties are infinite, adapted to the infinite multitude of creatures who are preparing for immortality, we are entitled to conclude, that it was the purpose of Providence, by this infinitely-varied endowment of talents and of discipline, to provide an equally varied order of powers for the future places of his unbounded dominions. Neither, accordingly, are we entitled, in conformity with the same general views, to conclude, that the future state of any individual among mankind can be carried to its destined pitch of exaltation by occasional acts, or even by longer portions of obedient conduct broken off from a life which, in other respects, has been devoted to thoughtlessness or sin;—for our *whole* life and history on earth are intended to be a preparation for the glorious scenes on which we are hereafter to enter,—and every moment that has been withdrawn from a conscientious performance of the duty that is now given us to do, must detract a corresponding portion from the blessedness or the exaltation of that state to which we were intended and fitted by our Creator to rise amidst the immortal glories of his heavenly kingdom. Though, therefore, we should spend the last days, or months, or years of our lives, in a continued exercise of all holy duties and devout affections, we have yet failed,

to a certain extent, in the course we were destined to run and in a corresponding share of the glory we were fitted to have inherited, if the preceding portions of our lives have not been accommodated to the rules prescribed to us by our powers, and by our place in existence;—and nothing, consequently, can be more absurd, or at least more obviously founded upon limited and partial views of the intentions of Providence, and of the powers and destiny of human nature, than the belief which is yet apt to influence the conduct not only of the ignorant and vicious among mankind, but even of men of the most enlightened conceptions on other subjects,—the belief, I mean, that though we may have yielded during part of our earthly course to the solicitations of vice, a path is yet opened to us, by corresponding endeavours after new obedience, to *all* the advantages we could have acquired by a life which, through all its parts, had been in conformity with the will of God. In short, the whole of our present conduct, even our most secret thoughts and feelings, have a relation to those greater portions of our history which are hereafter to be disclosed,—for the scheme of Providence, of which *we* form a part, is at once a continuous and a progressive scheme,—and if something, therefore, may be done even during the last stages of life, to efface the impressions of early folly, much must still be wanting in our future condition, which would have formed a part of it, if, instead of the broken and interrupted obedience which we have actually offered, we had been throughout our whole lives dutiful and successful servants of God.

The superior condition of our future being, however, considered as a consequence of the present may either result from the present, by means of a

series of causes established in the constitution of things,—or it may be viewed simply as a reward given to those who have done well their part as beings gifted with an important trust in this first stage of their existence.

There are two principles of the divine economy which seem to put it beyond question, that the former of these two suppositions is that which accords with the fact. The principles to which I allude, are, in the first place, the continuous character of all the dispensations of Providence and of Nature,—insomuch, that the whole scheme of *things* forms but one grand plan, and what we see of it is but a part, not disjoined from the rest, but only *made manifest* to us, as beings gifted with peculiar senses, and with a definite nature. And the second principle is this very important one, that throughout all his operations the Author of being seems to proceed not by acts of power simply, but by provisions of wisdom,—by a beautifully-adapted series of means, finely shaded into each other, and all conspiring towards that great and constantly-improving result which his infinite wisdom has in view.

From these two principles, then, it seems to be certain, that our future condition will be the result of the present, by means of a series of causes beautifully, though to us at present invisibly established,—and guiding all things, under the superintendence of Omnipotence, to final good. So that although it is probable that our nature and state will be so changed in the future life, that our present knowledge, however highly prized by us, will vanish away, as unsuited to the new views and higher order of creation that shall then be made manifest to us,—and though even our virtue, which in time is but an exercise of affections suited to a

definite sphere of existence, and limited to the occasions which that sphere presents, will be succeeded by new and better adaptations of our nature to the plans and progressive kingdom of God, —still the vigour we have put forth in the acquisition of such knowledge and of such virtue as are suited to our present nature and present place, may become, in the order of nature, and by a series of provisions leading to this result, the foundation of those new and better powers with which we are hereafter to be endowed ;—and as in the present life we have derived our constitution of body and of mind from causes which operated during our existence in a state of being very unlike our present, though introductory to it,—so we may be destined to enter on our new and higher career with a constitution of immortal vigour, of higher or lower temperament, according as in the present life we have been industrious or remiss in the cultivation of the talents that have now been committed to us.

It makes no difference as to the *divine origin* of the reward that is to be conferred on us hereafter, whether we consider that reward as destined to come to us through the instrumentality of a series of causes already established in nature, and operating with unfailing regularity,—or whether we consider it as given by an immediate and public act of the righteous sovereignty of God. Because nature, —and Providence,—and all the series of effects that exist in either of these, whether viewed as limited to the present world, or as extending into higher and future conditions of being,—are obviously the appointments of that Being from whom all things have originated, and by whose boundless skill all things are conducted ;—and, therefore,

whatever comes to us in any conceivable portion of our existence, by the instrumentality of such arrangements, is as much the effect of divine appointment, as if it had been marked by an immediate and sovereign exercise of divine power, and of supreme retributive justice. Indeed, in the present life, it is *only* through a series of means that the Deity ever acts, either in rewarding or punishing his creatures ;—yet he has so constituted the order of events, that his arm is occasionally as evident in the final result, as if it had been made bare for a direct exhibition of its power ;—and we have only to suppose, that the series of causes which are to affect or determine our destiny in a future state, shall be marked by a still more legible impress of the same sovereign design,—to fit them for answering any purposes which could have been accomplished by an immediate exhibition of the righteous sovereignty and impartial justice of God. The purposes of Providence are uniformly carried into effect in time, not by exertions of power solely, but by *provisions of wisdom*,—that is to say, by a beautiful adjustment of causes conspiring together, often from unexpected quarters and through a great variety of channels ;—and we have no reason to suppose, that, in higher manifestations of the vast plan of the universe, a different mode of acting shall be adopted,—but rather, that the *wisdom* of God shall there only be rendered still more wonderful, by being made to co-operate on a *more extensive scale* with his power, in assigning unto all creatures their station in existence, “ according to that which they have done in life, whether it has been good, or whether it has been evil.”

Although, however, the result is the same, as to all practical purposes, whichever of these two suppositions we adopt, yet that which is founded

on the belief, that our future condition shall be determined by the operation of a series of causes previously established by the infinite wisdom of God, has several advantages,—in so far as regards the view which it opens up to us, of the beautiful and extensive provisions of the divine kingdom ;—which advantages strongly recommend it to our adoption.

In the first place, it evidently opens up to us a far more continuous and extensive view—of the wonderful and boundless arrangements of that kingdom, to the contemplation of which we have been admitted by the possession of those rational and moral powers with which we are at present endowed, and with the future progress of which, indeed, we feel that all our best and eternal interests are associated. This extent of view is afforded us by the consideration, that what we see around us is not a complete and insulated plan, the arrangements of which do not extend beyond that awful and dimly-discerned line which separates things present and visible from the things that are future and invisible ;—but, on the contrary, that the beautiful portion of the vast kingdom of God which already meets our view, is but a specimen and portion of one vast and boundless plan, which extends throughout all space, and is coeval with all duration ;—a portion and specimen of it, *made manifest* to our view, because suited to the powers with which, as entrants upon rational and moral life, we are now endowed,—and intended to signify to us, not that the portion which is beyond our gaze is altogether unconnected with the present, but only that higher faculties must be developed in us, before we shall be able to extend our view over a far wider and more glorious portion of the same immeasurable domain,—all the parts of which are

resplendent with manifestations of that wisdom and goodness, which though every where adapted in their operations to the powers of the creatures to whom the particular manifestation is made, are yet every where the attributes of the same God,—and assume their infinitely varied aspects throughout all worlds, for the final disclosure of one connected scheme.

The same mode of thought is recommended to us, in the second place, by the indissoluble connexion which it reveals as subsisting between even the most evanescent and apparently minute portions of our present conduct, and those great and enduring results which are to be disclosed for us in higher and more permanent conditions of our being. Indeed, this view leads us directly to the belief, that there is no portion of our conduct, or of our modes of thinking and acting, however little noticed by ourselves, or however forgotten amidst the succession of ever-changing interests that have made up a history, which shall not have its share in determining the condition of our nature, when all present interests shall, with respect to us, have passed away;—and an unspeakably momentous interest is thus given to all our present actions, and feelings, and purposes, as being not merely the sources of our good or bad fortune in time, but the powerful agents which are working out for us our destiny, when we shall find ourselves surrounded by altogether new and grander manifestations of the transcendent wisdom and goodness of God.

Indeed, it is mere consonant with such views to regard ourselves, in the third place, not so much as merely occupants of any portion of the divine dominions with which, at any moment, we may be connected, but rather as parts of that vast and

varying scheme itself,—having our nature, with all its powers exquisitely adapted to the arrangements amidst which our course, at any particular period of our existence, is to be run,—and thus reaping the consequences of our former conduct by the very constitution of that system in which, as progressive heirs of immortality, our immortal course is at any time ordained for us. Our nature thus bears a perfect correspondence with the material arrangements amidst which we are at present situated,—and with the history and changes of which, the race to which we belong has obviously been coeval, or rather forms itself but one leading portion,—and the views we are now endeavouring to elucidate lead us to believe, that a similar correspondence will be manifested between our higher nature and the condition in which it also is to be placed,—or rather, that our change of powers will be but one portion of a still more extensive change, by which the form and character of the universe itself is to assume to us a new aspect, though still perfectly suited to the new development which our powers of comprehension and of enjoyment have undergone.

This mode of conceiving the arrangements of the divine kingdom is also beautifully coincident, in the fourth place, with the instructive and interesting view given us by Christianity of the nature of the powers and opportunities with which we are now gifted;—namely, that they are not merely acts of bounty,—or blessings which have been conferred on us, solely as tokens of the liberality of God,—but trusts or talents, which are intended by the Giver to be wisely and conscientiously used by those to whom they are given,—which, accordingly, are of such a nature, that in the case of every individual, they may be either wisely or un-

wisely employed,—and which, according to the mode of their employment, infallibly draw after them either happiness and honour,—or misery and shame,—both in the present order of the Universe, and still more conspicuously in that greater development of its arrangements which is to take place amidst the unrevealed glory of the eternal world. We have thus a new corroboration given to the great doctrine of human immortality ;—for as we have been furnished, in our present powers and opportunities, not merely with a gift or blessing, but a trust,—that trust involves the idea of responsibility for its management,—and the notion of responsibility, again, involves the idea of honour that is to be gained, or of infamy and misery that are to be incurred, according to the manner in which the trust has been discharged ;—so that if God has indeed given us such a trust, he has thereby pledged himself, by a covenant which cannot be broken, that the wise occupiers of that trust shall be honoured,—and the unprofitable occupiers exposed to ignominy and unhappiness in those greater portions of his progressive scheme, where the tendencies of all present things are to receive a more complete development.

The same instructive mode of viewing the arrangements of the universe, and our essential relation to its successive changes, also teaches us, that the interests of the vast and continuous scheme of Divine Providence are carried forward by the co-operation of an infinity of minds,—insomuch, that we have no reason to believe that even the most insignificant or evanescent of the beings that are called into existence, are without some influence on the entire plan, of which their existence has formed a part ;—and from this it follows, that, however small may be our apparent lot in life, or

however few or obscure the duties that seem to have fallen to our share, we are as much bound to a faithful discharge of these duties and a correct occupancy of that sphere, as if either of them had been of the most conspicuous, or apparently influential kind. Because our place, however mean, has a relation to the entire plan which is going forward in existence,—and our unwise fulfilment of its duties may not only evince our individual faithlessness, and interrupt our private welfare, but may exert a pernicious influence on the progress of minds and the disclosure of plans, which are to affect most extensive interests of the divine government. And thus there is thrown, by those views, a new and most interesting light on even the most humble sphere of existence, and on the relative importance of the most apparently uninfluential duties.

Indeed the whole of these views are strikingly illustrative of the nature of human duty and of the consequences resulting from it, as these have been portrayed by the divine wisdom of the Son of God, in the truly-instructive parable of the talents:—"For the kingdom of heaven, said our Lord, is like unto a king who called unto him his servants, and delivered unto them his goods,—and straightway took his journey ;—and to one he gave ten talents, and to another five, and to another one." And when he took account of his servants, he said unto those who had improved their trust, "Well done, good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you rulers over many things, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Thus teaching us, that our small trusts in the present life, are, however, connected, if we faithfully discharge them, with important consequences in the life that is to come,—and that

we ought never to presume to despise any trust or any duty, however apparently insignificant,—because we are incapable of foreseeing what important relations it may have not only to the exertions of others who have a greater charge, but to our own final lot in existence, when the tendencies of all present actions shall be more completely disclosed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THE following short statement may be considered as comprising the results of the reasonings in which we have been engaged in the preceding discourses.

I.

CORRECTION OF ERRORS OR OF IMPERFECT MODES OF CONCEPTION.

I. We are not authorised to expect perfection in the future state, when the word perfection is taken in its absolute and unqualified sense,—for that belongs only to God.

A late Author, who seems to have been more remarkable for the early maturity and independent vigour of his poetical talents, than for the justness or extent of his views respecting the arrangements of the divine economy, has, however, succeeded in evolving upon this topic, the true tone

of sound philosophy. The following passage is supposed to be spoken by one of the heavenly hosts to an inhabitant of earth, who had recently arrived on the fields of light,—and is intended to explain the Author's ideas respecting the comparative attainments of the heavenly inhabitants :

“ But think not Virtue, else than dwells in God
Essentially, was perfect, without spot.
Examine yonder suns. At distance seen,
How bright they burn ! how gloriously they shine,
Mantling the worlds around in beamy light !
But nearer viewed, we through their lustre see
Some dark behind ; so virtue was on earth,
So is in heaven, and so shall always be.
Though good it seems, immaculate, and fair
Exceedingly, to saint or angel's gaze,
The uncreated Eye, that searches all,
Sees it imperfect ; sees, but blames not ; sees,
Well pleased, and best with those who deepest dive
Into themselves, and know themselves the most ;
Taught thence in humble reverence to bow
Before the Holy One ; and oftener view
His excellence, that in them still may rise
And grow his likeness, growing evermore.”

POLLOCK'S *Course of Time*, b. iv. p. 123.

As the general strain of the foregoing passage contains an explicit statement of the Author's views respecting the *comparative perfection* which alone can be ascribed to the spirits of the Just ;—so the concluding verse is equally plain respecting another principle which ought to attend us in all enlightened speculations on such topics,—namely, the *progressive and everlasting advancement* for which the spirits of the redeemed are destined.

2. But further, as we have thus no reason to anticipate for ourselves absolute perfection in the future state, neither are we entitled to expect that, in that state, the condition of all beings shall be

equal;—this being an idea which is founded solely on the previously-refuted idea of spiritual perfection,—and which, consequently, must be given up, whenever the basis on which it rests has been subverted.

3. Neither, in the third place, have we any reason to believe, that our future condition shall be altogether *fixed* and stationary;—that is to say, limited to one unvarying measure of attainment or of excellence;—for this, too, is a supposition which results only from the previous conception of perfection as the attribute or condition of the inhabitants of heaven.

4. Finally, We have no reason to conclude that the employments of the future state shall be of *one unvaried kind* to all souls;—because the idea of perfection, in the absolute sense of that word, being given up, we are led to admit the existence, in the celestial inhabitants, of all orders and kinds of attainment and of excellence,—corresponding with which must be the infinite variety of their places and duties, as occupants of the bright and boundless dominions of God.

II.

PRINCIPLES OF JUDGING RESPECTING THE FUTURE STATE.

1. The works and ways of God,—or the successive states of all progressive beings,—are as various in their characteristics, as they are marked by profound and beautiful design in their constitution;—and, therefore, we have reason to conclude, from this varied character of the divine works—as well as from many other very obvious considera-

tions,—that our future condition shall be much more different from the present, than, in the familiar and indeed necessary habits of conception that now belong to us, we are disposed to represent it to ourselves.

2. There is not, so far as we can perceive or have reason to believe, any chasm or disruption in Nature,—but all things pass into each other by finely-shaded and imperceptible gradations ;—and, hence, we are entitled to conclude, that our future condition, though characteristically and in all its endowments *different* from the present, will, however, be the *result* of it ;—or that we shall enter on our future career with a constitution of higher or lower temperament and vigour, according as in the present life we have been diligent or remiss in the cultivation of the powers that have now been intrusted to us.

3. The arrangements of the divine kingdom are essentially *progressive* ;—and, therefore, we have reason to expect a future condition of being which shall be much more glorious than the present, or rather which shall consist of a series of ascending improvements.

4. The economy of the divine kingdom, as we now see it, is carried on by the *union* of myriads of minds, each different from every other, in its place—and powers,—and range of duties ;—insomuch that, among the infinite host of creatures, no two are in all respects, nor, indeed, in any one respect, completely alike. God is thus, evidently, preparing an equally-varied order of powers for the future places of his heavenly kingdom ;—every man will, therefore, receive in that future state a place, and powers, and trust, suited to his improvement and fidelity in time ;—and the boundless empire of God will thus continue to be carried on, in eternity

as in time, by the united and harmonizing exertions of myriads of infinitely-varied beings and services.

5. Nature, or the kingdom of God, as far as we now observe or have reason to conclude respecting its arrangements, is *endless* in duration and in progression;—and, consequently, we are entitled to conclude, that the progress of all virtuous beings shall be correspondingly endless and progressive.

III.

RESULTS AS TO OUR EXPECTATIONS.

What we are entitled to expect in the future state, may be concluded, *generally*, at least, from the foregoing correction of errors and statement of principles, as follows:—

1.—A higher station in the universe, affording us a wider,—a more glorious,—probably altogether a new,—but, at any rate, a more complete view of the economy of the creation, as it respects both what we call the *works* of God and those courses of established causes and effects, which we commonly denominate his *ways*, or the proceedings of his Providence;—although, in fact, these two orders of events ought not to be separated, being, in reality, but different aspects of the same grand plan.

It is probable, that our views shall be especially enlarged respecting that portion of the divine conduct, with which our own history has been more directly interwoven, or which has, in an espe-

cial manner, contributed to our discipline, during our abode on this preparatory scene. But whether this shall be the case or not,—that is to say, whether our view shall extend backwards to the scene over which we have previously passed,—we may however be certain, that the new views which shall hereafter be opened up to us, shall be *adequate to the solution* of all the mysteries that have perplexed us in time, and probably to the solution of much greater apparent intricacies.

2.—Powers and capacities, perfectly suited to the new order of things amidst which we shall then be placed ;—and, consequently, as completely new, and as much more exalted in their nature, as the sphere we are then to occupy shall be characterized by novel and more glorious arrangements than those which now form our subordinate sphere. Indeed, the station of any being in existence, and the powers with which that being is endowed, cannot be separated,—for his consciousness of his place, and his adaptation to fill it, or to perceive its relations, depend entirely on this perfect coincidence between his faculties and the sphere which he occupies,—so that, were the powers of any creature materially changed, his place in the universe would, by means of that alteration, have seemed to have undergone a simultaneous and corresponding alteration. The universe, therefore, is to us at every moment *what it is*, only because our powers of perceiving and enjoying it have at that moment a definite character, corresponding with our place.

3.—Complete freedom from all the low and sinful propensities that have had their origin in our *present peculiarity* of material organization,—and the adornment of our nature with new, and higher, and more satisfying powers of feeling, of aspira-

tion, and of moral and divine enjoyment. Thus the *characteristic sins* of this life must disappear with the putting off of that mortal tabernacle in which they have had their source ;—and a nearer approach to the perfect condition of the eternal Spirit, and a consequent experience of new, and purer, and more rapturous emotions must be the necessary consequence of our elevation to the possession of a nature adorned by novel attributes, and gifted with superior vigour ;—though it is probable, that even our purest moral and religious feelings, as we now experience them, may be altogether inadequate representations of that new series of feelings which are to fit our nature for its glorified station amidst the wonders of the universe.

4.—A *relative* place or station amidst the infinite host of beings, proportioned to our previous powers and preparation. There are all *degrees* as well as *varieties* of place and of advancement in the present life, and this seems to form part of the grand plan of Divine Providence for carrying on his kingdom, and for rewarding or punishing his creatures ;—we have no reason, consequently, to suppose that this part of the scheme will be abandoned in higher and future portions of it ;—and, indeed, all the hints that revelation has afforded on this subject, seem to confirm the supposition, that a corresponding order and gradation of places or station shall be continued hereafter.

5.—A higher and greater *trust* in carrying forward the process of the Divine Government, than we have held on earth ;—“ he that had improved his five talents, being made the ruler over five cities,”—“ and he that had used well his ten talents, being made the ruler over ten cities.” Or, to use the more general, but not less characteristic words

of our blessed Lord, "they who have been faithful over a few things, shall be made the rulers over many things."

6.—Communion with beings of far higher powers,—and purer Natures,—and holding more important and effective trusts in the divine kingdom, than even the best of those with whom we have been familiar, or have had any opportunities of observing on earth. It is probable, that those who have gone through a *similar course* of preparatory trials shall be associated together in the future portions of their history;—at any rate, it is likely, that as the exaltation of the Redeemed from among men has been the effect of a grand scheme, which has pervaded all the portions of the divine economy in time, and has been marked by a wonderful series of events in the concluding portions of the history of him who is our Fore-runner into bliss,—he having at last gone visibly up from a mountain of this earth into the glory prepared for him,—it is likely, and, indeed, seems to be explicitly declared, in many passages of the sacred books, that our future lot in the divine kingdom shall be not only with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, but with the Redeemer, whom we shall see us he is,—“with angels, and with the Just made perfect,”—with the vast multitude of the Spiritual Host.

7.—Endless and everlastingly-progressive and ascending honour and happiness.

Such being our prospects, why should death be anticipated with terror?—Surely, to those who are “strong in Faith,” and who are able to depart in “Hope of the glory of God,” these prospects ought to render their removal from this world an event rather to be hailed with joyful triumph, than to be dreaded as the greatest of evils;—nor can we

wonder that, when this view of our future fate has been gained, language such as the following should have been employed as the most suitable expression of the triumph and even rapturous longing it has awakened:—

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—“Now am I ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand,—I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life,—which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me at that day,—and not to me only, but to all them, also, who love his appearing.”

“I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“My heart and my strength fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

“This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.”

“Mortality shall be swallowed up of life.”

“Thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven,”

“Lord, receive me into thy kingdom.”

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”
Amen.

THE END.

Mr W

